

# **HYPER**»

## **THE DARKNESS**

Next-gen as all hell

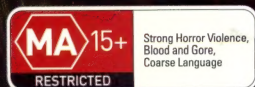




**THE TOP SHOOTER OF 2005 LIVES ON\***

**"SAY HELLO TO THE SEASON'S  
FIRST BLOCKBUSTER..." - IGN\*\***

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\*Awarded "Best Shooter of 2005" by GameSpot - December 2005 \*\*GameSpot August 2006, IGN August 2006





**"CONSOLE-ONLY GAMERS WHO LOOK JEALOUSLY UPON THE PC'S BOUNTIFUL FIRST-PERSON FRUITS WILL HAVE ONE LESS REASON TO COMPLAIN THIS NOVEMBER." - GAMESPOT\*\***



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The PS3 finally guns its engines...



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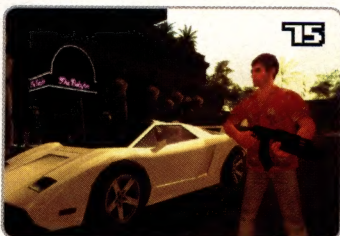
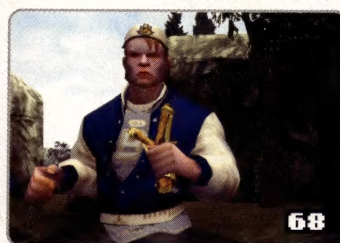
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WIN A MASSIVE 106cm SAMSUNG HIGH-DEF PLASMA TV! PAGE 14!



## EDITORIAL

» If you visited Hyper HQ right now, all you'd likely find would be the charred husks of myself, Wilks and Malky clamped firmly in front of our monitors - the aftermath of one hell of a deadline. It's been a long month, and not just because of trips to Tokyo and Barcelona. It's been a long month because the games industry is in an explosive phase right now, and we've been caught up in the energy of it all. Not only have we been flooded by a tidal wave of Christmas releases, we've also been going hands on with two new systems, both of which are killer apps in their own way.

After the drubbing the PS3 received at the hands of the media (ourselves included - and for good reason), it was gratifying to hit TGS and see the system have a strong show. It's still going to launch with bugger all stock and it's still overpriced, but at least there's a huge selection of games on the way, ensuring that despite the many teething problems, Sony are here to compete.

The imminent launch of the Wii, on the other hand, sees Nintendo already riding a wave of hype and raw enthusiasm from journalists and gamers around the world. It's been a masterful campaign, but now Nintendo must prove that their machine has what it takes in the marketplace. Will casual gamers or lapsed gamers really lay out the cold hard cash for

a Wii? Will your grandfather really gurn like an idiot in front of this thing? And most importantly, can Nintendo balance the need to provide simple and accessible games for the masses, with the deep titles that the Nintendo faithful crave?

There's a long road ahead in the next-gen console war, but things are about to get really interesting...

**Cam Shea » Editor**



[up] A pic from a Tokyo toy store... WTHIWWJP?



[up] Daniel Staines, Ken Kutaragi and Cam... officially BFF

## HYPER CREW Monthly Top 5 Games

### Cam Shea - Editor

1. Super Mario Galaxy - Wii  
"Scour the spaceways! Explore vast alien worlds!"
2. Beating up Amos in Scarface - Xbox
3. Okami - PS2
4. Resistance: Fall of Man - PS3
5. Ableton Live 6 - PC

### Daniel Wilks - Deputy Editor

1. WoW: The Burning Crusade  
"10 more levels of social life to lose."
2. Guitar Hero II - PS2
3. Steamboat Chronicles - PS2
4. Gothic 3 - PC
5. Mortal Kombat: Armageddon - PS2

### Malcolm Campbell - Art Director

1. One Piece Grand Adventure - PS2  
"Still no Afro Luffy though..."
2. LEGO Star Wars 2 - PS2
3. Ultimate Ghosts 'n Goblins - PSP
4. Super Mario Galaxy - Wii
5. Guitar Hero II - PS2

### Daniel Staines - Writer

1. God Hand - PS2  
"My new god is an ape dressed like a Mexican wrestler."
2. Guitar Hero II - PS2
3. NeverWinter Nights 2 - PC
4. Dead Rising - Xbox 360
5. Mortal Kombat: Armageddon - PS2

# HYPER»

## ISSUE 158

### DECEMBER 2006

### WRITE TO HYPER!

78 Renwick St, Redfern  
NSW 2016, Australia  
Ph: (02) 9699 0333  
Fax: (02) 9310 1315  
E-mail: [freakscene@next.com.au](mailto:freakscene@next.com.au)

### EDITORIAL

Editor: **Cam Shea**  
Deputy Editor: **Daniel Wilks**  
Art Director: **Malcolm Campbell**

### ADVERTISING

Advertising Managers:  
**Ashley Day**  
E-mail: [ashleyd@next.com.au](mailto:ashleyd@next.com.au)  
Ph: (02) 9699 0349  
Fax: (02) 9310 2012  
**Aiman Gouda**  
E-mail: [aimang@next.com.au](mailto:aimang@next.com.au)  
Ph: (02) 9699 0367

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscription Co-ordinator: **Digby Naude**  
Customer Service: **Justine Lynch**  
For all Subscription enquiries phone:  
(02) 9699 0320  
(02) 9699 0327  
Email: [subs@next.com.au](mailto:subs@next.com.au)

### MANAGEMENT

Publisher: **Phillip Keir**  
Finance Director: **Theo Fatseas**  
Operations Director: **Melissa Doyle**  
National Sales Director: **Lynette Rochford**  
E-mail: [lynetter@next.com.au](mailto:lynetter@next.com.au)  
Ph: (02) 9699 0305

### PRODUCTION

Production Co-ordinator: **Leiani Reardon**  
E-mail: [leianir@next.com.au](mailto:leianir@next.com.au)  
Ph: (02) 9699 0356  
Fax: (02) 9310 2012  
Ad Production: **Dylan Fryer**  
E-mail: [dylanf@next.com.au](mailto:dylanf@next.com.au)  
IT Support: **Fahri Cantas**

Printed CTP by: **WEBSTAR**

Distribution by: **Gordon & Gotch**  
Customer Service Ph: 1300 65 0666  
Fax: 1300 65 0777

### CONTRIBUTORS

Alexander Gambotto-Burke, Seamus Byrne, T. Henderson, Eliot Fish, Jonathon Ikeda, March Stepnik, Van Hammersley, Dirk Watch, Christ Read, Daniel Staines, Sally Woellner, Glen Downey, Christopher Taylor, Dylan Burns, Kos Andreadis, Yhtzee Crowshaw.

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XBOX 360™



# newsw

news ticker broken/inane gibberish/ken sates unveils microstation wiibox/random wordage/enlarge yo

X06

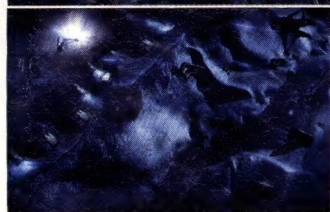
## HALO

Yeah, but an RTS?

Microsoft know when they are on to a good thing and they like to run with it. In this case, the good thing is the Halo franchise and running with it would be the three Halo franchise titles talked about at X06. Of course there was a little more shown of Halo 3 but people already knew that was coming. What took people by surprise was the fact that Peter Jackson and his newly formed Wingnut Interactive will be working with Bungie on an as yet untitled (and unknown) Halo spin-off property. All we know about the title is that Peter Jackson will not be "creating a game as we know it" and is more interested in new ways of telling stories than he is in watching films at the moment. We'll keep you posted about any new information on this one.

The other big information of course was the announcement of Halo Wars, the first RTS set in the Halo universe. Announced with an impressive pre-rendered video showing a battle between a SPARTAN unit and a group of Covenant Guards, Banshees screaming overhead. An impressive sight to be sure and one met with no small amount

of adulation, whooping and generally American carrying on (no small feat considering the event was in Spain). Interestingly, Bungie will not be the developer of Halo Wars, the title instead going to Ensemble Studios. Yes, they of Age of Empires. It's a bold move that shows how dedicated Microsoft is to the Halo brand. There should be more big announcements about the game in the upcoming months. We'll be sure to let you know what we hear.



X06

## NOT A FAIRY TALE

Fable 2 facts. No, really

Peter Molyneux is fast becoming the premier apologist in gaming. Over the last few years it seems that every time he opens his mouth he prefaces everything with apologies for features that he talked about in previous games that failed to make the final cut either due to time or the lack of technical ability. Before talking about his plans for Fable 2 he made a bold claim — if he fails to deliver with Fable 2 he has no business making games.

One of the key features of Fable 2 (already implemented and working in a test form apparently) is the whole "plant an acorn, grow a tree" concept that was conspicuously absent from the first game. In what Molyneux calls "dynamic regions" players will be able to truly influence the world; the example given was a small camp in a wood — when

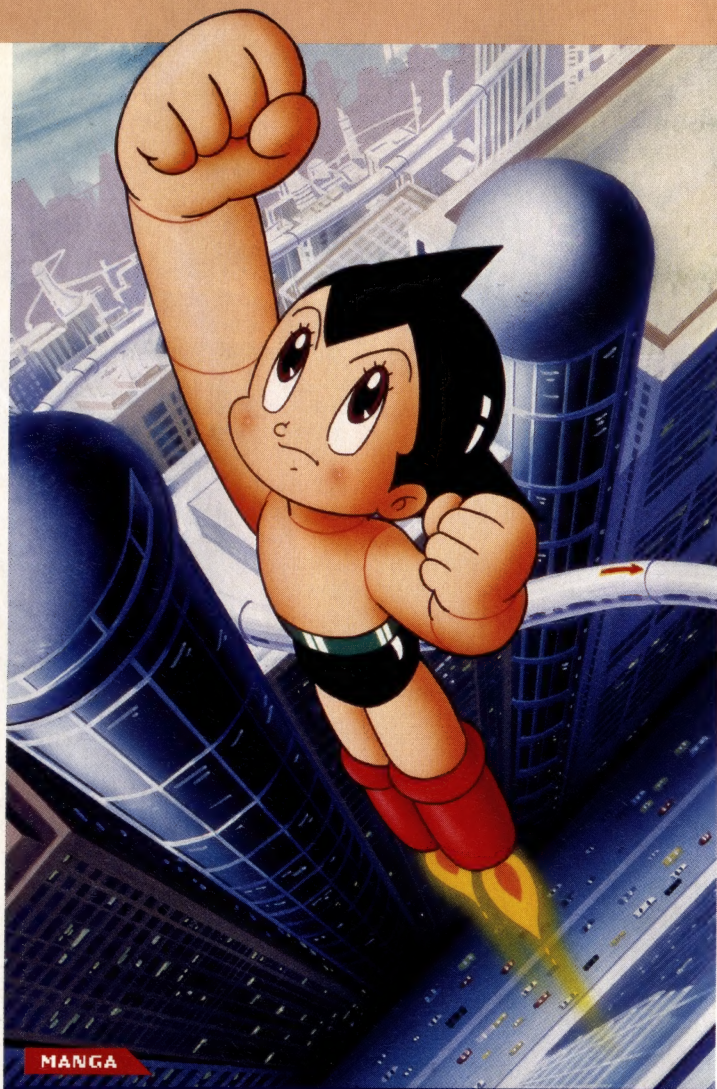


you first find it it's a few tents and a camp fire but years later it may evolve into a town or city, unless you decide to kill them all and it will evolve into nothing. Other features talked about were unconditional love — spouses can have children who will be influenced by your actions, the ability to play as either a male or female character, the ability to buy almost all of the real estate in the game all the way from a simple shack through to castles and dungeons, combat that will only utilise a single button but will be dynamic and influenced by the environment and a final, earth-shattering secret that we will be able to play with early next year. Fingers crossed that Peter and Lionhead live up to the promises this time.



Not Pictured: Master Chef and pals cooking up some hot lead sundaes





MANGA

## TEZUKA EXHIBITION!

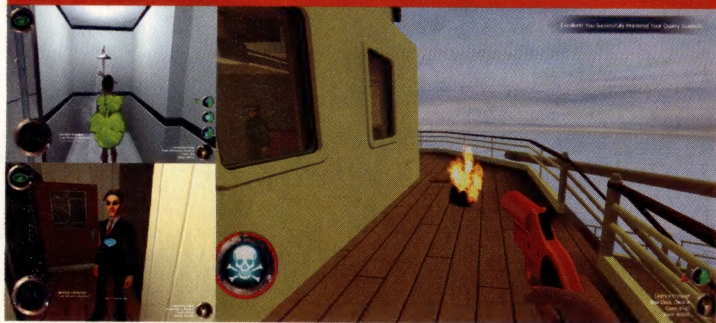
**Astro Boy art down under**

Recently opened at the National Gallery of Victoria is an exhibition dedicated to the work of pioneering manga artist Osamu Tezuka. Yes, the genius behind Astro Boy, Kimba and countless other manga and anime series. Open from November 3 through to January 28 next year, this is a landmark exhibition, with over 200 original works from the late 1940s through to the late 1980s. The Deputy Director of the NGV, Tony Ellwood commented that "The planning of Tezuka: the Marvel of Manga has involved over five years of complex negotiations to release important material from Tezuka Productions in Tokyo. This is the first time Tezuka's original drawings have been seen in the West." Sydneysiders who want to get along to the exhibition will just have to be patient – it will be toured to the Art Gallery of NSW some time in the future. If you're in another state, well, it may be time to take a trip to Melbourne.

## Out Now!

**DUE:** Out Now

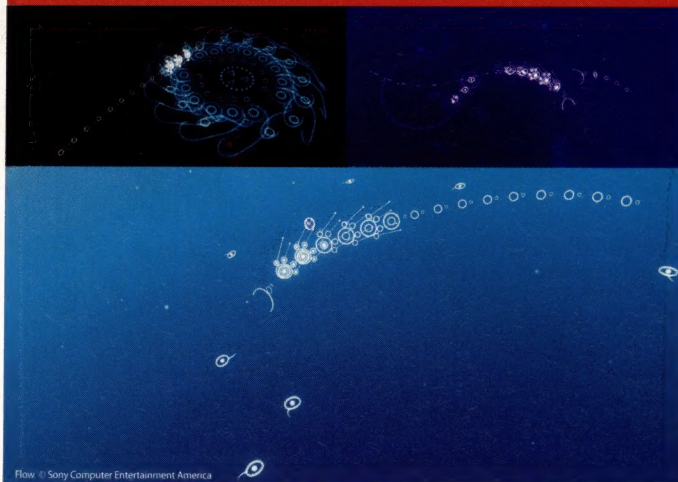
**THE SHIP PC Developer:** Outerlight • **The Hype:** Now available at retail for \$49.95, The Ship runs on the Source engine and is a multiplayer FPS set aboard an art deco cruise ship where players are coerced into a brutal hunt under threat of death...



## First Look!

**DUE:** Launch

**floW PS3 Developer:** TGC • **The Hype:** Once a flash game, now a motion sensitive game for PS3's digital distribution service, floW is a hypnotic underwater title that sees you control a micro organism as it glides around, moving up the food chain.



**D'OH**

## CLOVER NOT SO LUCKY

**Hyper does a Darth Vader "NOOOO!"**



Clover of the four leaf variety is meant to be lucky but it doesn't appear that the famed Capcom development studio of the same leafy name has any of that fabled commodity. Clover Studios, developer of such acclaimed games as Okami as well as new office favourite God Hand, has been shut down by Capcom. According to the press release, "Clover Studio Co., Ltd. has met the goal of developing unique

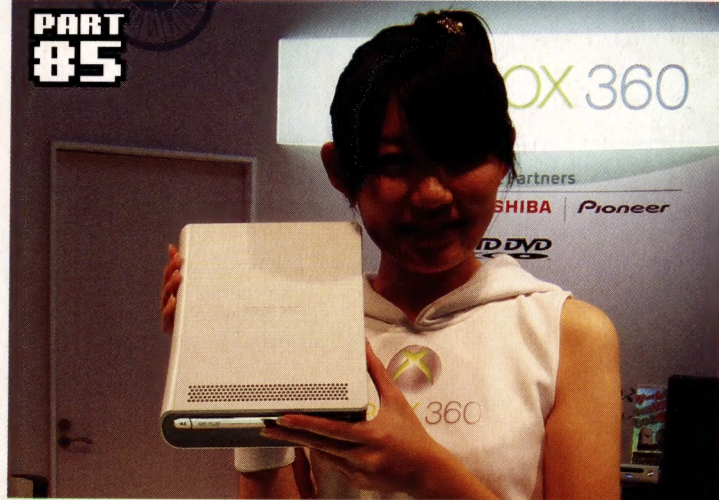
and creative original home video game software, however, in view of promoting a business strategy that concentrates management resources on a selected business to enhance the efficiency of the development power of the entire Capcom group, the dissolution of Clover Studio Co., Ltd. has been raised and passed at a Board of Directors' meeting." Kind of a nothingy statement to commemorate the end of one of the shining lights in Japanese console development. Better get back to milking those franchises some more Capcom.



## CAPTION THIS!

Come on, make us laugh. Just send your funny screen captions to us at [captionthis@next.com.au](mailto:captionthis@next.com.au) with **Caption This Part 85** in the subject line.

**PART 85**



KAWAI!!!!



## OVERFLOW

Renowned development studio BioWare has created a handheld division! Their first title is an as yet unannounced Nintendo DS title, to be directed by Dan Trudge, former president and founder of Exile Studios. BioWare entering the handheld space is quite an exciting announcement, especially in light of the comment by BioWare's president Greg Zeschuk "As always, we are committed to creating the best story-driven games in the world, and the Nintendo DS offers us an exciting new platform to engage".

*In one of the most gripping announcements in recent memory, Hilary Duff and her Chihuahua Lola are set to appear in The Sims 2: Pets. In fact, you can pick up this landmark title at stores now. Quick, get there before they run out!*

The brains behind God of War, David Jaffe, has revealed he's working on a new title with Twisted Metal developers Incog. It's called Criminal Crackdown and is a top down cel shaded racer/party game. It's coming to the PS3 digital distribution service early next year.

*GO3 in Perth early next year is shaping up to be the local gaming conference to get along to. They've announced that GO3 has "developed a collaborative agreement with the management of GSTAR and Tokyo Game Show, to share ideas and resources to maximise the exposure of each expo throughout the Australasian region." And if that's not enough, one of the confirmed speakers for the event is Masaya Matsuura of Nana On-Sha studios. Yes, the genius behind PaRappa the Rapper! Boo-ya! More on GO3 next issue.*

## Winners! HYPER 156

### DEAD RISING

- Daniel Lane, Wayatinah, TAS
- Michael Ward, Smithfield, QLD
- J. Wilson, Port Macquarie, NSW
- Brandon Hughes, Adelaide, SA
- Camille Phillips, Auburn, NSW
- Andrea Foley, Darling Heights, QLD
- Phillip Godfrey, Goulburn, NSW
- Lee Kelly, Albion Park, NSW
- Alex McIntosh, Toowong, QLD
- Alexis Patrick, St Kilda, VIC

### PASSION

## MORE EMINENCE GOODNESS

Two turntables  
and a... oh, wait



For their next performance, the Eminence group are paring things back somewhat. Simply titled "Passion", the concert will feature two solo violins, as well as one guitar, percussion and piano. The idea is to really focus in on creating a great, and at times impressionistic violin performance, covering some classic anime and gaming scores. You'll hear music from Chrono Trigger, Chrono Cross, Xenosaga, Shadow of the Colossus, Final Fantasy XII, Secret of Mana, Haibane Renmei, Tsubasa Chronicle and, of course, Super Mario Bros.

The concert won't be a must-attend for the music alone either, as Eminence have also arranged to have two very special guests. Hitoshi Sakimoto, the composer behind Final

Fantasy XII and a huge array of other titles, will be here for the Sydney concerts, while Yasunori Mitsuda, the composer of Chrono Trigger, Chrono Cross, Xenogears and many other classic scores will be here for both the Sydney and Melbourne events. These guys are huge stars in Japan, so it's great they'll be out for the concerts.

So, when, where and how much? I hear you cry. The Melbourne concert is at the Forum Theatre on the 9th of December, for a 7:30pm session. The Sydney concerts are at the Verbrugghen Hall at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music on the 16th of December, with a 3pm and 7:30pm session. Prices range from \$25 to \$65 plus booking fee. For more info on where you can get tickets, go to [www.eminenceonline.com](http://www.eminenceonline.com).

## Composer Profiles

Hitoshi Sakimoto and Yasunori Mitsuda are two of the most celebrated Japanese videogame soundtrack composers, and they're making their way to Australia in December for Passion. We were lucky enough to ask them some questions ahead of the trip.



### Hitoshi Sakimoto Q&A

**You founded your own music production company Basiscap in 2002. Do you prefer working independently in the industry?**

Of course! If I don't think working independently is better, I would have quit already. It has broadened my horizon in what I can do and it is great fun.

**How much freedom did Square-Enix give you in composing the score for Final Fantasy XII?**

They gave me quite a bit of freedom, the number of pieces which failed completely was very few. However they did say for me not to do something so maniacal! Also that since it's a very popular title, not to write in only one style but in a variety.

**What composition from FFXII are you most proud of?**

Serobi Plains [FFXII Disc IV Track 1] was the piece I'm proud of. I think I was happy when I heard the piece again later, as I was able to express what I wanted to do as a composer and when you listen to it, there is that kind soft touch to this music.

**As technology has matured, how has the job of a videogame composer changed?**

Since I have been working for a long time now, the variety of musical expression one can create with the technology available was once very poor. However, since I am not persuaded by what I have at my disposal, I'd like to think it hasn't affected me so much in my line of work. In terms of workload, to make a piece "listenable" to the audience, it required a huge amount of work compared

to today. So, in terms of a composer, the work hasn't changed, however as a sound programmer, the workload has lessened dramatically.

In the old days, the technology was very very expensive and it required very specific programming work. There was so much work to do something so simple.

**Games developed in Japan and games developed in the West tend to be very different in their approach and style. Do you think this applies to the soundtracks as well? If so, what do you see as the major differences?**

For soundtracks made in Japan, the developers ask for simple and effective melodies instead of complex Western Hollywood style soundtracks. So the VGM (videogame music) collectors in Japan don't necessarily collect Western movie soundtracks.

**You're coming to Australia for "Passion" in December. What are you most looking forward to on the trip?**

Since it's the first time it is for me to go to Australia! I am very curious to meet the audience and musicians. I always loved the country since it's so beautiful and always wanted to visit.

**Is it a surprise to learn how dedicated the following for videogame composers is in Australia?**

Yes it is, but I am very happy about this ^^

**Do you play many games? If so, what are you playing at the moment?**

I used to play a lot of games but these days I don't have enough time to play games. The last game I played was Half-Life 2 and I really love playing Western FPS. I really love FPS because of the virtual reality in a first person mode.

**Are there any Western games that you'd love to write a score for?**

An FPS shooter soundtrack! Especially Science Fiction or a near future shooter.



eminence



## Yasunori Mitsuda Q&A



**Your first game title as a composer was on the legendary Chrono Trigger – a soundtrack that is still hugely popular today. Do you think that great music – no matter what**

**medium it is created for – is timeless?**

Yes, because it does not matter what medium I write for, music is music.

**As technology has matured, how has the job of a composer in the videogame industry changed?**

It has changed greatly, however the work time I put in has not changed. I seem to be always running out of time as there are many things I want to do with my composition. In terms of composition, there are not really many changes, however as the technology mature, we obviously can create better sound out of the music.

**You became a freelance composer in the late 90s – why did you decide to venture out on your own? Has it given you more freedom to pick the games that you really want to compose for?**

I wanted to freelance since there wasn't any network with the people outside of Squaresoft (now Square Enix). I always wanted to work with a broad range of people, not just within the confines of the Game Industry. In terms of being able to select games which I want to compose for, there isn't really much selection, however, there are a lot of fun games to compose for.

**You're coming to Australia for "Passion" in December. What are you most looking forward to**

**on the trip?**

Tim Tams! (laughs) This is the first time for me to go to Australia so I am very curious about the culture of Australian people. Also, in this concert, it features ten of my pieces so I am interested in the impression I make on the Australian people.

**Is it a surprise to learn how dedicated the following for videogame composers is in Australia?**

Yes it is, as I had a very outdoor culture idea of Australian people. I was very unaware that gaming was so big in Australia.

**Do you think that concerts like "Passion" help to change the public perception of videogames? To treat them as a legitimate artform?**

Yes, I think it will gradually become so... I think it must be done. I am not sure about being treated as a legitimate artform. I think every composer must be conscious that they compose a piece of art instead of a mass production process. Unless this stops, I think it will be hard to consider it as legitimate artform.

**Do you play many games? If so, what are you playing at the moment?**

Yes. Age of Empires III, I really liked the game. However, I reformatted my HDD and lost my save games so I might replay the game when I have the chance.

**What inspires you to write music?**

View that I create in my mind... it's all in my imagination that inspires. To create a stimulus for that, I love looking at paintings.

**What are you working on at the moment?**

I am unable to mention titles but I am doing a PS2 game due to be released in December, two games for DS and a title for Wii.

**Thanks for your time!**

I look forward in seeing you guys in December!

SEGA

## NORTHERN LIGHTS

**Best trilogy ever becomes film, game**

Finally after a few years of toing and froing the film version of the first book of the fantastic Philip Pullman trilogy *His Dark Materials* is underway. Budgeted at \$150 million (US), *Northern Lights* (or *The Golden Compass* depending on whether we get the American or UK title out here) will be the biggest New Line film since *Lord of the Rings*, with Nicole Kidman and Daniel Craig already cast and Oscar nominated Chris Weitz directing. Although this is good news by itself, more interest comes in the fact that Sega have signed a deal with New Line and Scholastic to produce a game based on the film. The *His Dark Materials* trilogy has a game world ripe for gameplay (honestly, who wouldn't want to eat faces as a giant armoured talking polar bear) as it traverses numerous worlds and many situations fraught with danger. We'll just keep our fingers crossed that the game doesn't simply shape up to be a hack and slash with a few story related cutscenes but actually takes advantage of the protagonists' skills – Lyra's ability to lie and Roger's fighting spirit and ability to wield the Subtle Knife could really open things up.

## Billy Dee!

**C&C 3: STARRING BILLY DEE WILLIAMS**

**PC Developer:** Probably Billy Dee Williams • **The Hype:** Why was Empire the best Star Wars film? Because it had not one, but two handsome rogues – Han and That King Among Men, Lando. Now Billy Dee Williams is set to work his magic in C&C3's live action sequences. Best. Game. Ever.

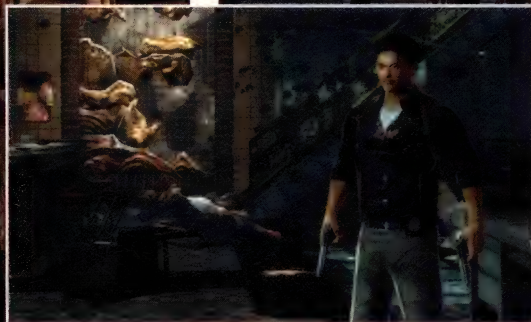
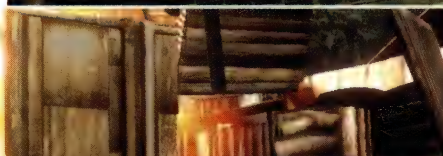




# STRANGLEHOLD

SYSTEM: PC/PS3/Xbox 360  
 DEVELOPER: Midway Chicago  
 CATEGORY: Shooter  
 PLAYERS: 1-Multi • DUE: Q1 2007

If you want proof that Midway are back on their game, look no further than Stranglehold, the videogame sequel to John Woo's incredible HK action flick Hard Boiled. Players take on the role of one of the most bad-ass cops in cinema history – Tequila, played in the film by Chow Yun Fat, who also lends his likeness to the game. Running on the third major iteration of the Unreal Engine, Stranglehold looks incredible, with the balletic bullet-time laced gunfights leaving the environments battered and scarred as tables are knocked over and chunks are blown out of walls. Originally due late in 2006, Midway have delayed the game until Q1 2007 to ensure that they get it just right. For more on the game, check out our original feature from issue 152. This one is looking awesome.









# WIN A SAMSUNG 42" HIGH-DEF PLASMA TV!

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An HDTV is an essential part of any gaming or home theatre set up these days, and this new model from Samsung is one of the best money can buy. The PS42Q7HD is first and foremost an intimidating screen. We're talking 106cm of gaming bliss here people, with a native resolution of 1024x768 and a 10,000:1 contrast ratio. Your games will practically explode off the screen. It even has a "game mode" so you can instantly switch to the optimum settings for both visuals and sound to get the most out of your gaming. Of

course, it also has a High Def tuner built in, so as HD broadcasts ramp up, you'll be equipped to enjoy them. With full HDMI connectivity, you'll also be able to run your inputs in 100% digital video and audio. What else is there under the hood? How about Filter Bright technology which is designed to ensure you'll get a great image in any lighting conditions, as well as the Smooth Motion Driver which enhances fast moving action by adjusting the image and adding additional frames. Want it? Then what are you waiting for? Get subscribing!



#### PS42Q7HD Facts

- Huge 106cm HD Plasma Screen
- Inbuilt High Definition Tuner
- 10,000:1 Contrast Ratio
- HDMI Connectivity
- Optical Digital Audio Output
- Filter Bright Technology
- Smooth Motion Driver
- 2 Year Warranty

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**HYPER**

**HY0158**



Systems: PS3, Xbox 360  
Category: FPS  
Players: 1-Multi  
Developer: Starbreeze  
Due: 2007

# HEART OF

**Christian Read** takes a trip to New York to see Starbreeze's latest opus, *The Darkness*...

**"Oh f\*\*k, it's *Estacado*!"**

says the Mafioso goon before I shoot him in the goddamn mouth. Blood sprays out the back of his head, the only spot of color on the wet, grimy New York streets. Knowing his crew are just around the corner, I slink back into the shadows and shoot out the streetlights. Luck. The sparking lamp tells me there is a Darkling nearby. I suck up the energy of the Darkness and the two demons that frame my vision appear to my left and right. I extend the demon arm and pick up a dumpster, ready to throw it at the goons who are about to rush me. Needing back up, I summon up the Darkling, the impish creatures who serve me. It sniffs around the goombah's dropped pistol and in a rasping, whispered voice it says "Shiiliny" before chewing some poor bastard's face off.

This is *The Darkness*, the forthcoming first person shooter from Starbreeze and 2K Games. It is great. The producer, Anthony DeLuca takes the controls from me and says, "let me show you the gun katas". Oh my, yes. More blood! Two years in the making and still a while away from shipping, this thing shows rare promise, and I'm glad I've made the trip to New York to check it out.

## MINOR HIT, MAJOR GAMEPLAY

Starbreeze had a minor hit with *Chronicles of Riddick: Escape From Butcher's Bay*. That game was a diamond in the rough, extremely playable, brilliantly conceived and executed. A silent runner game, it took the whole *Tenchu: Stealth Assassins* mindset, gave it shivs, improvised murder and nasty guns and wrapped it around a strong character and stunning art and surprised the world.

Like *Butcher's Bay*, *The Darkness* is another license, this time from the murky four-color world of Top Cow's comic books and once again, the lads have worked extremely hard to bring out the strong points of the original work the game is based on. Cocky, arrogant mob hitman, Jackie Estacado is damn good at his job. So much so that he's got his Uncle Paulie, the local mafia don, looking to whack him just because he's such a pain in the balls. Here's the thing:

**A vicious entity whispering in your ear, the Darkness really elevates the game experience into the cinematic**

**Dual wielding now comes as standard in every action game**

**Sometimes self medication is the right approach**

Jackie is the next in line of an ancient legacy and on his 21st birthday, he'll inherit the twisted powers of the symbiotic demon called the Darkness. From there, Jackie will have to not only sort out his family problems but he'll also have to cope with his supernatural and bloodthirsty new ally, who has its own agendas and desires, not all of which are in Jackie's own best interests.

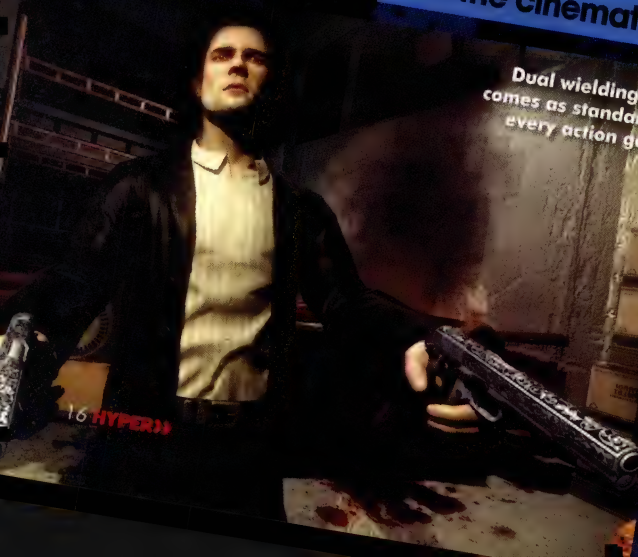
Famous for stunning art and a rather violent plotline, adapting the Darkness could go horribly wrong. Comic licenses have produced some wildly awful games despite being based on some great books, after all. (*Hellboy*, *Spawn*, we can see you). By working with one of the comic writers, Paul Jenkins, the feel and style of the graphic novel has been successfully translated. The game has a really strong plotline, a character who is violent and cruel and yet always oddly likeable, and some sophisticated, realistic dialogue. This isn't *Zelda*, you know? It'll earn that M rating a time or two over. One of the first dialogue trees you'll interact with concerns a profanity ridden conversation with Butcher, a man who cleans up gruesome murders for the mob. It's a morbidly funny conversation, discussing local criminal politics with a big fat man who is throwing severed body parts in the back of a station wagon. The game is filled with such darkly interesting touches. If you're the kind of person who

can appreciate *Deadwood* or the *Sopranos*, you'll be right at home with this sort of material.

## NEXT-GEN AS HELL

Next-Gen: it is one of those damn buzzwords that come out of the Marketing department that rattle around until they lose all meaning. Ten trillion polygons per picosecond. AI so advanced it can tell how often you touched yourself playing *Dead or Alive*, blah blah blah, a console that makes fine daiquiris and rubs your shoulders, blah bloody blah. Any games with a narrative are pointless unless they are a journey you go on with the characters. You could have the most amazing designs, a physics engine from the year 2525 and blood splash so realistic Horatio Kane itself would puke up, but without a great story you end up with *Doom 3*. Technically breathtaking but ultimately an uninvolved experience. These days, you have to go the extra mile beyond the pretty graphics and *The Darkness* really steps up on this front.

Sure, it's got the great plot and Jackie's brutal quest for survival that has you barracking for a violent killer, but that's mandatory for a good game. There's also a kicking soundtrack, moving effortlessly from slamming, adrenaline-pounding guitars to creepy, isolating wails. But where *The Darkness* really stood out to me as well above the board was the voice acting







### Multiplayer morsels

Currently, *Darkness* has a tentative multiplayer project in mind. Of course, there's the usual capture the flag bollocks but we're also looking at one particularly intriguing set up: multiple players using the standard human set of weapons and skills against one player with the *Darkness* powers. Up to as eight human players versus one *Darkness*, so there's a good gauge as to relative power levels





Yeah, I'd be running the hell away right now if I were you...



Did you ever see Oz? The actor who played Miguel Alvarez, Kirk Acevedo, plays Jackie. Tough talking, he brings a sense of determined, gutsy bravery. Lauren Ambrose, who played Claire from Six Feet Under, plays Jenny, Jackie's only friend, his conscience and confessor. But they all pale besides the contribution of one Mike Patton, most famous from Faith No More but also known for his work with Mr. Bungle, Handsome Boy Modeling School and a whole bunch of damned strange experimental vocals, who voices the Darkness. The twisted whisperings, the moody orders, the vicious giggles... The Darkness is more than a set of powers, it is a major character that continually taunts, laughs, congratulates and has its own goals. A vicious entity whispering in your ear, the Darkness really elevates the game experience into something seriously cinematic.

So yes, it is Next-Gen as hell and yes, it looks gorgeous. During the demos I saw, the game went from a car choked tunnel to a construction site, to a warehouse and lock up. The textures of the walls, from peeling plaster to freaky graffiti, to litter on the streets is basically real. Paint cans litter the construction site, dumpsters and rubbish bins and cars dot the street, all part of the



interactive environment. The facial models of the NPCs are particularly grand, each being unique and masterfully designed. Cutscenes are particularly well done, as voice actors were filmed and used as a basis for character motion. This is as real as it gets, ladies and gentlemen.

#### MESSY FEATURES

It is hard to bring something new to the FPS genre. The Darkness steps up big in this respect with a whole mess of interesting features. There's two modes of play. Firstly, you're just Jackie, who is a regular malocchio, a tough guy with a gun. The game plays pretty straight to open up with and anyone who has touched an FPS in the last few years will pretty much know the drill. That said, without a Heads Up Display, the Darkness really pushes the immersion factor, and you never know how much more you can take. It's only through ragged breathing and the sound of your own suffering that you know how bad things are.

Gun Katas are a real draw. Sneaking up on mobs, shooting particular weapons at certain locations, combos and the like, provide some gruesome fatalities to make you giggle your bleak little heart out. Headshots look to be a favorite of the production team as I am demonstrated the effects of

gun directly into the soft mouth of a wiseguy. Class!

It's not far into the game however, that you get your Darkness powers and things really heat up.

When you summon the Darkness, two demonic snake heads frame your vision. These work as shields and as indicators of which of the several Darkness powers you have active.

Firstly, there's the Demon Arm. A great black tentacle of night, the Demon Arm works to smash lights and serve as a weapon. However, its true usefulness comes into play by giving Jackie super strength. People, objects such as cars, dumpsters, bodies, all of them are meat for this cruel appendage. It's sort of an all-purpose Swiss Army Knife. A personal

favorite moment of mine was when during the demo, producer Anthony grabbed some mafia douche bag's corpse and threw it onto a circular saw. In seven years as a professional gaming journalist, this was the finest spasming corpse twitch and blood splatter I've ever seen. And that's saying something.

Next up is the Creeping Darkness, which is a kind of snake/worm/demon thing that acts as a remote viewer and even weapon for Jackie. At one point, Jackie is confronted with a locked door, behind which are several enemies. Too many for a frontal assault. The Creeping Darkness was released and it shuffled through the air vents to drop down on the bad guys, wreaking a rather tasty carnage. Any kind of sneaky tactics will rely on the Creeping Dark as an advance scout, as its ability to climb up walls and other hard to reach areas means you can gather information on enemy placements. Of course, while you can see through its eyes, enemies will get a free shot at you while the Creeping Dark is deployed, so use it wisely.

**Snuffling about, whispering random inanities, the Darklings exist in light sources through the game**



Just keep telling yourself that Jackie is the nominal good guy





The Black Hole, which may have another name by the time of final code, is exactly that. A hole that sucks in enemies, and loose debris. Still not quite ready by the time I got to play the code, it looked a little overpowered, actually. A very impressive animation had a room full of enemies, coffee cups and papers whooshing into outer dark.

The Darkness powers also give Jackie a shield, a rather nifty ability to see in the dark that causes everything to take on an eerie glow and on top of that, Jackie has access to many of the weapons you'd expect from an FPS, as well as the Ancient Weapons that only wielders of the Darkness powers can use. Sadly, I didn't see any of that stuff so I can't really comment. Still, that doesn't matter because Jackie's allies and slaves are the real winners of this game.

#### **DARKLINGS**

Slightly different from the comics but still one of the big draw cards of the game are the Darklings, imps and demons who serve to give broad hints, work as extra muscle and serve various miscellaneous purposes. Shuffling and snuffling about, whispering random inanities and humorous nonsense, the Darklings exist in light sources throughout the game. Destroy the illumination, free the Darklings. The Darklings I saw hovered around a hidden entrance to a chamber, hinting at a secret way through a level. Another came hurtling down a hallway with me, providing that extra bit of firepower in a tense situation. My happy Darkling move was a Darkling leap that ended with the biting off of a face. Up to four Darklings can be

used at a time, which doubtless will be a huge advantage.

There are going to be four varieties of Darklings in the finished product: Berserker, Lightkiller, Kamikaze and the Gunner. Having seen the Berserker at work, I'm most eager to see what havoc the others can wreak. Who can resist a shadowy cannibal goblin that just wants to get all suicidal for you? DeLuca laughs to himself when I mention I am interested in seeing the Kamikaze. "Just you wait," he replies.

If the AI can work as well in the finished game as it did in the sections I saw, the Darklings are going to be the killer feature of this game. It's not that you want to hug them or anything but they certainly have a kind of cuddly appeal for the darkly tuned of mind, oh yes.

Speaking of AI, I notice some mafia goons I'm battling with are beginning a rather nice flanking movement on me. Anthony points out a fellow sneaking over a wall, trying to stay out of my sights, and comments that "we're trying to prevent the AI from ever becoming stale". Using an engine designed by Starbreeze in-house, the enemies are organised and certainly do evolve tactics over time. The engine also brings a really gritty feel, keeping what is basically a game about superpowers very tightly grounded. Marcus Fielding, PR man for 2K, comments that later on the game will move from "real to surreal" more easily with a wholly "fantasy-based" level taking place. Neither he nor DeLuca could be drawn out further on the subject, so look out for more announcements on that. Another minor, but impressive, feature of



I can't see this conversation going too well

the game is plain old televisions. Jackie can watch the tube to see news comments on his current actions. Also, if you feel the urge, you can currently watch the classic horror movie *Nosferatu*, in real game time. There's also some public domain cartoons to check out. This takes the director's cut idea of Butcher Bay in a different direction. While it's perhaps not as radical as Bay, Starbreeze and 2K are currently toying with the idea of allowing user created submissions, such as fan movies, into the game.

#### **STILL PERCOLATING**

While the Darkness is shaping up to be a very impressive piece of work, we have our fingers crossed that Starbreeze will really shake up the setting and enemies over the course of the game. Having only seen three levels, this comment might be premature, but no matter how photo-realistic and well researched the setting is, 11 or so hours of game time set solely below 8th Street might get a little old. And there certainly needs to be a few more enemies than guys in suits swearing at you. Thankfully, the

game is still early, so we're more than prepared to give the team the benefit of the doubt for now, particularly as the three levels we have seen showed immense potential.

So when's it coming? Well, we won't be seeing it for a while. US 'Spring-ish' is the closest I could get to a firm date, which seems a little bit tentative to me. Still, better to keep that bun in the oven until its done cooking, as a chain smoking teen mother once said to me. Available on both PS3 and Xbox 360, The Darkness looks like a must have game for 07. It has all the looks but it also has a great character, some rather fabbo powers and features to keep you interested and hell and damn if Mike Patton doesn't whisper evil into your ear the whole way. <<





# Nintendo

# Wii



## Launch Feature

The Wii is almost upon us. In less than a month gamers around the world will be getting their hands on Nintendo's new baby, and it surely won't be long until we know whether the gamble has paid off. It's certainly make or break time for Nintendo in the home console business. After the disappointing performance of GameCube, Nintendo really couldn't afford to put out just another console, and the way the company has shifted their focus to innovation and accessibility, first with the DS and now with the Wii, is admirable. Whether or not they'll truly expand the home market for gaming remains to be seen – and after seeing wave after wave of Nintendo's painfully embarrassing lifestyle shots it's not hard to be cynical. Fortunately, the Wii really is easy to pick up and use, and titles like *Wii Sports* and *Wii Play* are sure to be hits with the whole family. Of course, that leaves us with the question "what about the hardcore gamers?" If the Wii is a success with the 'casual' market, does that mean we'll see less and less 'core' games and more and more gimmicky mini-game titles? Is the Wii destined to be a gaming sideshow, with the PS3 or Xbox 360 as the main course? These are questions we can't answer yet, but what we can do is give you the team's impressions after getting some decent hands on time with the console...



## The Wii Channel Menu

Boot up the Wii and you'll be taken straight to the Wii Channel Menu. It's a clean layout that gives you quick access to games and utilities. With 12 channels on screen at once and four pages you can scroll through, you have quick access to 48 options, and each game you download or new app you get will automatically take up a channel slot in the grid. The layout is customisable too, so you can keep the links you use the most on the first page.

What follows is a quick run through the main channels you'll come across when you get your new Wii out of the box, but the important thing to keep in mind is that Nintendo will keep adding channels as they see fit. If they think of a cool idea, they'll be able to run with it. What this means is that the Wii will gain more functionality over its lifespan.

- 1 **DISC CHANNEL** / Insert a GameCube game or Wii game disc and this is where it will show up. Just point and click and you'll load the game.
- 2 **MII CHANNEL** / What's a Mii? It's your avatar for the system and certain games. In the Mii Channel you're able to create and delete Miis, as

well as watch all the Miis you have on your system walking around interacting.

The Mii creation process couldn't be simpler – there are all the options you'd expect such as face shape, hair, eyes, eyebrows, nose, mouth, facial hair and glasses, each with a wide range of options, a variety of colours to choose from, and most importantly, the ability to raise/lower, move, turn, expand and squeeze each attribute to truly come up with something unique. The models are very very simple, but you'll be surprised at how close you can make your Miis look to your friends and enemies. You can have a huge number of Miis saved to your system (the idea being that you create one for each member of the family), but best of all,

## FLASHY

The Wii comes with 512MB built-in flash memory, which may sound paltry compared to other systems, but for the most part should be enough. A lot of the online functionality will be streamed, while game saves and Virtual Console games won't take up much space at all (all NES games were well under 1MB, while most N64 games were between 4-16MB). Just in case you do run out of space (or channels), however, you can delete Virtual Console games you're not currently playing without fear. Nintendo will be keeping a registry of purchases tied into a unique ID for each machine, so you can simply download it again for free. Plus, the SD Card slot means that you can always expand your system's memory.



## WHAT YOU GET

So come launch day, what will you get for your hard earned \$399.95? Well, you'll get the console obviously (including the console stand, composite A/V cables, sensor bar and sensor bar stand), plus one Wii-mote (including batteries), one Nunchuk controller and Wii Sports. You'll also get Shiggy's eternal love. Bargain!

you can save a few directly to your Wii-mote, which you can then take over to friends' houses. Not only can you then load up your Mii for multiplayer (in games such as Wii Sports, Wii Play and WarioWare), you can also dump them onto your friends' Wiis, adding to the Miis wandering around on their Mii Channel. After a few visits with friends you'll all have a thriving little Mii community.

We can only imagine how well this system will work online as well. No doubt each person you add to your friends list will also see their primary Mii pop up on your machine.

**3 PHOTO CHANNEL** / While we're still hugely sceptical about who exactly is going to bother looking at photos through their console, the Photo Channel nonetheless has some interesting options. The idea is to just pull your SD card out of your camera and jam it into your Wii for instant gratification. Scrolling through photos is quick and simple, and there are some cool thumbnail layout options, including one that shows every photo on the card. You can also draw on them, adjust lighting/filters, zoom in and create slide shows (complete with your own mp3 tune). You can then send them on to friends through the Wii Message Board.

### INTERNET CHANNEL /

Powered by an Opera browser with full Flash support, you'll even be able to use your Wii to surf the net. The browser should be free to download until the end of June 2007, but after that new users will need to purchase the browser for an undisclosed number of Wii points. While we've only seen limited demonstrations of the browser, the point and click interface seems to work really well, and the ability to seamlessly zoom in on areas of interest is a particularly nice touch.

**4 FORECAST CHANNEL** / All the excitement of weather forecasts, in a console! Yes, the Wii automatically updates local forecasts, both for the day at hand and the week. The coolest part of this channel for us though, is the ability to

The Wii-mote has built-in memory that's used to save your Miis, but it's reportedly only 4KB!

## THE CONSOLE

Flip the top of the console open and you'll discover four GameCube controller ports and two GameCube memory card slots. While under the front panel you'll find the SD Card slot and the synchronisation button (used to sync Wii-motes to the system). On the back there's the power slot, a sensor bar slot, multi A/V output and two USB ports.



## Nintendo embrace TEH INTARWEB

Another aspect of the Wii that Nintendo are pushing quite hard is its "always on" net connection (or WiiConnect24 as they've called it). When your Wii is in standby, it's still connected to the internet, so while you're sleeping, content can be sent to your machine, whether it's game news, a new level, a trailer or a message from a friend. Nintendo's goal is to give you a reason to turn on your Wii every single day, and ensuring that there's something new waiting for you is a part of the strategy. It also means when new content is available, it won't necessarily be a chore to download - it may simply be waiting for you when you wake up.

rove around a map of the globe. You can even zoom the perspective right out and spin the globe like a model.

**NEWS CHANNEL** / Another automatically updated service, your Wii will keep you in touch with breaking headlines from around the world. And changeable font sizes mean that even your granny will be able to read it. Not that she's likely to.

**WII SHOP CHANNEL** / In the Shop you can buy or redeem Wii points which can then be spent on classic console games from NES, SNES, N64, Sega Genesis and NEC TurboGrafx. You'll also be able to download the Opera web browser from here.

**5 VIRTUAL CONSOLE CHANNELS** / Each Virtual Console game you buy for the Wii will pop up as its own channel in the Channel Menu. Pricing for Virtual Console games out here is roughly in line with the U.S. prices. For \$30 AU you'll get 2000 Wii points, and game prices start at 500 for NES, 800 for SNES and 1000 for N64, so you're looking at \$7.50, \$12.00 and \$15.00 respectively. There will be at least 10 titles available through the Virtual Console service at launch, with more to be added every month.

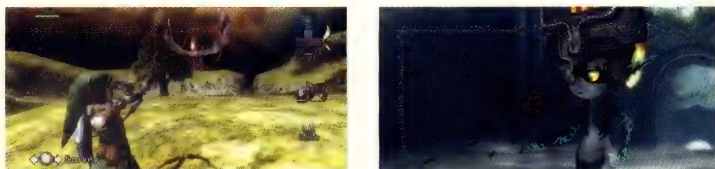
In addition to 20 years of killer Nintendo titles, a large range of other publishers are on board, including the likes of Konami, Capcom, Atlus, Sega, Sunsoft, Jaleco, Tecmo, Taito, Chun Soft, Kemco, Takara Tomy, Bandai Namco, Square Enix, Banpresto, Hudson, Irem and Koei.

**6 WII MESSAGE BOARD** / This isn't actually one of the normal channels but a little envelope button at the bottom right of the Wii Channel screen. Using it you can send messages (with attached photos if you choose) to other friends on Wii, or even to PCs and mobiles. You'll also be receiving messages - this is where you'll find out about new content. Fitting in with the family machine concept, you can also leave messages/photos for family members on the built-in calendar. We can't wait to see how Nintendo integrate this functionality into software like Animal Crossing.



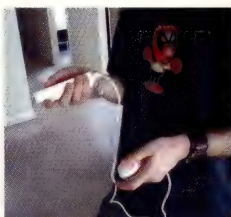
# GAMES

In the spirit of the system we figured we'd get a few members of the crew involved for optimum multiplayer fun – Cam Shea, Daniel Wilks, our art director Malky, our resident import reviewer Sally Woellner, our resident game philosopher Daniel Staines (aka Stiz), and PC Powerplay's art director Glen (but don't hold that against him). We also figured we should take some shots of us playing the damn thing and see how they stack up against Nintendo's depiction of the average Wii player. Here we go...



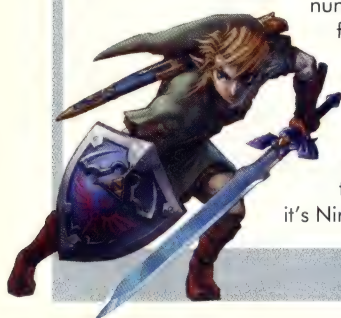
## The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess

**SALLY:** Zelda's graphics were some of the most impressive of the games on show, and on top of that, the Wii-mote-turned-sword combat is good fun (although concentrating on keeping your Wii-mote within the sensor area can get annoying). Its buttons are used well thanks to contextual menus, allowing the Wii-mote to function as sword, bow or boomerang. The ability to chain attacks using the Wii-mote to slash and the Nunchuck controller to perform spinning sword combos in quick succession will hopefully be expanded through the game, as it definitely showed potential. The game's quite enjoyable, even despite the clumsy camera, which moseys along sedately behind you, lagging around corners and turns. But it's encouraging to note that according to Nintendo, we ain't seen nothing yet as far as the depth of this title is concerned.



**MALKY:** I'm not as convinced as Sally about the Twilight Princess controls, at least those for the main dungeon demo. They felt grafted on, with skittish aiming and very basic waggle-the-Wiimote sword fighting. In stark contrast, the controls for the fishing mini-game were excellent – flick the Wiimote to cast and jink the lure around, then hook the fish with the nunchuk and reel that sucker in... perfect! So, fishing's great, sword fighting not so much.

Hmm... Look, it would be unfair to judge Twilight Princess on a ten-minute demo that deliberately showed none of the really interesting stuff. I'm sure the controls just needed some calibration or something. If not they'll be fixed for the launch, right? I mean, it's Nintendo and Zelda! It'll be great!



## WarioWare: Smooth Moves

**SALLY:** WarioWare probably does the best job of introducing the many ways in which the controller can move and track without being too patronising. There are over 200 uber-micro mini games, most of which are charmingly loopy enough to bring a smile to your face. You're presented with a moment or two of instruction before each game starts, to



let you know if you should hold the controller over your head like a mohawk, at your hips like a hula-hoop dancer, or out in front of you like someone trying to break into their hotel room with a credit card. While it feels a little like a Wii-mote demo, it's still bafflingly fun – and the squat-thrust level may even tighten your thighs and buttocks.

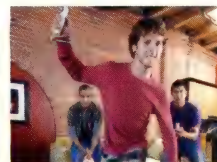
## Wii Sports

**SALLY:** Wii Sports offers a mix of effortlessly natural use of the Wii-mote, side-by-side with some less intuitive offerings. In Bowling, a flick of the wrist will give your ball some spin and send it gliding elegantly across the lane, and the game was easy to pick up as the bowling motion felt perfectly natural – so natural that our avatar didn't appear to be wearing pants, but that's not relevant here... On the other hand, Baseball and Tennis feel clumsier, and take more getting used to – especially if you're already clueless about backhands. Also, the avatars for the sports games are pretty plain, (despite their customisable faces) which is a little disappointing given Nintendo's normally charming simple character design.



**CAM:** Sally's bang on with the bowling. For my money there's a chance it's going to be the new Monkey Ball Bowling – there's just nothing like curving that ball in to clean up a tricky spare with a well weighted motion and flick of the wrists. Boxing was pretty cool too, allowing you to hold your hands up to your face to defend yourself, tracking your motion

as you bob and weave, then (unfortunately) proving a little unresponsive as you step in for a quick jab. The other sports weren't so impressive. Wii Tennis is a little too simple, with control lacking the depth needed to raise it out of gimmickry. Wii Golf has huge potential – using the controller as a club works a treat. Pity that the ball tends to end up in the same spot no matter who takes the shot. Wii Baseball was another game where the motion felt great but the rest of the game is a little shallow. But you know what? These aren't meant to be standalone games, and as a way to demonstrate the Wii-mote and nunchuk, they work a treat.



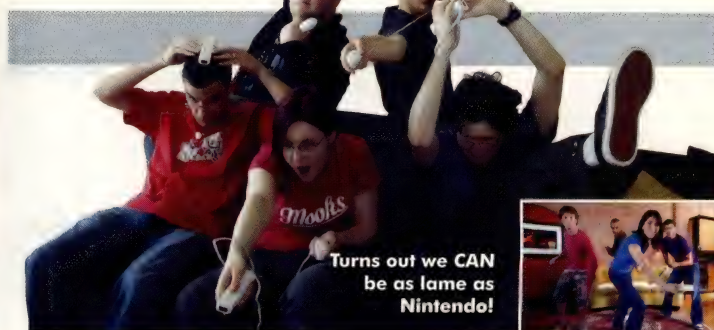




## Excite Truck

**GLEN:** Playing Excite Truck reminded me of the first time I fired up Super Mario Bros. on my NES. The first gap, I pressed A and swung the controller, along with Mario, over the gap. 14 years later and everything I've learnt about game control is thrown out the window. Actually having to steer corners, hold the line on straights, and nose the trucks into a smooth downhill landing was so ironically new. This coupled with the sense of speed made for some pretty spectacular mayhem. Although I'm not certain in the end whether the game or the controller was the star.

**WILKS:** As it stands Excite Truck still feels like the most readily accessible and immediately fun of the (near) launch titles. Although it takes a little while to get used to the control scheme using the Wii-mote, pretty soon you find yourself sliding around corners like a pro, feathering the turbo for extra grip. The terrain morphing is a winner too – running over icons on the track sees the path ahead transformed in front of you, for the most part letting you catch a little more air. Also cool is the ability to hit turbo as you leave the lip of a jump for a prolonged boost through the air.



## Super Mario Galaxy

**GLEN:** Mario in the Sky with Diamonds. A great introduction to both the nunchuk controller and the latest trip to the Mushroom Kingdom. The nunchuk handled the familiar thumbstick directional control, and Wii-mote controlled the position of a contextual cursor and gesture-triggered actions. Keeping up with this required a pretty splintered headspace, which did get a little confusing. Reminiscent of the way that Mario was prone to running around in circles the first few times around the Castle in Mario 64. The sense of scale rocketing around orbital debris was awesome, but the lack of high def pushing it is a shame.

**CAM:** This is the game that really melds fully featured game design with the controllers. In other words, Mario Galaxy is no gimmick, and is definitely my pick of the Wii titles in this spread. The controls feel great, with a flick of either wrist seeing Mario execute a spin jump or catch an ethereal jet stream to leap across space to a new planetoid. While some may see all the asteroid hopping as gimmicky and confusing, all I see is potential. The section we've played so far already featured several paths (leading to three different bosses – all cool) and like all good Mario games, it felt like there were secrets around every corner (or planetoid as the case may be). While puzzles were very basic, we can only imagine how cool the puzzles that span multiple asteroids will be in the final game.



Cam eases Malky into Wii Golf via the 'just friends' spooning technique



It's not about the thrust, it's about the motion...



## Wii Play

**CAM:** To be honest the most appealing feature for Wii Play is that it's going to come with a bonus Wii-mote. Not that it's all bad, but this is a package that isn't likely to be on high rotation at Hyper HQ. With a selection of mini-games, which I'll let Daniel Stains outline, nothing here is particularly memorable, and the package is mostly about getting people used to the controller. We also had a few issues with controller sensitivity – Laser Hockey and Table Tennis in particular were just way too skittish to control. Probably best to give Wii Play a wide berth.

**STIZ:** The main problem with Wii Play is that most of the games it features are complete arse. Here's a rundown: Find-Mii is an updated version of Where's Wally that somehow manages to be more boring than the original. Pose-Mii is like a one-piece jigsaw puzzle for two players. Laser Hockey is so touchy that it's almost impossible to play properly. Shooting is practically identical to the NES version of Duck Hunt. Fishing is FISHING. And Snooker... Snooker's actually pretty good. So! Out of the six games we saw, it seems that only one was worth playing. I guess it's a good thing this title is meant for your mum and dad – because God knows who else would bother.



## Metroid Prime 3: Corruption

**STIZ:** It's difficult to form a coherent impression of Metroid Prime 3 from a fifteen-minute demo. The Metroid games are always slow-burns – you really have to dedicate at least a few hours to them before you can understand what makes them tick. Hmm. Oh well! I guess I'll just gloss over the gameplay and talk mostly about the controls.

Okay, so – the controls. I don't like them very much. Using the Wiimote to aim Samus' arm-cannon and interact with the environment doesn't feel as natural or intuitive as I'd hoped it would. Many of the motion-sensitive actions (such as tossing

the grappling line) are fiddly to perform and the Wiimote's tendency to whig-out whenever it's not pointed directly at the sensor bar makes it difficult to relax. In all honesty, I often found that I was paying more attention to the position of my arm than what was happening on-screen. Which kind of sucks.

But listen: this could all be a matter of practise. It took me a while to get used to Prime on the GameCube, so there's a good chance the same rule applies here. And since it's Metroid we're talking about, I'm willing to give Corruption the benefit of the doubt – for now.

# OVERALL



CAM

This system definitely has more than a whiff of Ninty magic about it, that's for sure, and getting your mitts on the Wii-mote for the first time will undoubtedly be a memorable experience. For me though, the appeal of titles like WarioWare and Wii Sports will probably wear thin pretty quickly, so I just hope Nintendo can back up the likes of Zelda, Mario Galaxy and Metroid Prime Corruption with more 'serious' titles – the kinds of games that you'll be playing every day for weeks, not just for a quick post-pub session with friends. This system really has the potential to be something special, so I just hope it doesn't get mired down in party games.



WILKS

I'm very excited about the Wii but I still have some misgivings with the system that seem to grow, rather than abate the more I play it. I love the idea of the control scheme but there are definitely some niggles associated with calibration – especially for games that require direct pointing at the screen. Aiming in Zelda, for instance, was often erratic in our time with it. For now though, I'll give Ninty the benefit of the doubt – it could be non-final code or simply a calibration issue that we'll be able to fix when we have our own machine. One other thing – it's tiring! Waving your arms about is a tiring exercise. Maybe some third party peripherals developer should come up with some sort of Wii sling to wear while you're playing the console.



STIZ

I don't know what to think of the Wii. It's clear that it's going to be one of the most important game consoles ever released – this much is beyond dispute. When you consider games like Wii Sports and WarioWare, it's clear that Nintendo is going to have no trouble roping in the casual gaming demographic it's aiming for. But the question is: what about us? What about hardcore gamers? Will our years of experience with traditional gaming devices make it more difficult for us to appreciate what the Wii has to offer? In some regards, I suspect it might. But then I also said the same thing about the DS...



SALLY

Overall, the Wii showed a whole lot of potential. Many of the launch games seem designed mainly to familiarise people with the Wii-mote and Wii system, and are caught up in the novelty value of the controller – but that's only natural, and hopefully deeper and longer-lasting Wii games will come with time. There's enough promise in the launch games to provide many happy hours for hardcore Ninty fans, despite the proliferation of lighter content designed to interest curious non-gamers. The long-term ergonomic effects of waving your arm around for hours still remain to be seen, though – I'm preparing to add to the Wii jokes an entirely new genre of calls about gamers' sore wrists.



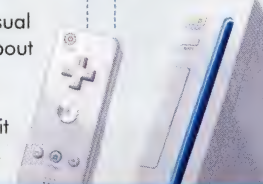
GLEN

To be honest I'm not at all interested in the connectivity features on the Wii. Nor am I that excited at the prospect of my elderly relatives springing out of their seats for a game of bowls with me. It's all about the Wii-mote. The promise it shows to invigorate gaming beyond simply adding a colon and a subtitle to an established name is huge. The potential it has to introduce new play mechanics we don't even know about yet is really exciting. However, the Wii-mote isn't going to code any games so we can only hope that the developers have got it under control.



MALKY

I really admire Nintendo for what they're doing with the Wii, experimenting and trying to break the "new console, better graphics, same old games" cycle. And it will be great if my four year old daughter can intuitively play games with me instead of struggling with the controls before eventually giving up, frustrated. Some of my doubts remain, outlined very well by Cam and Stiz above, but actually getting to play Mario Galaxy allayed a lot of my fears; it rocks. I just hope the Wii delivers past the initial wave of cool games and we don't end up with a situation like that of the poor old GameCube. Colour me cautiously optimistic.





**"...undoubtedly the best soccer game... a must buy" 9/10**  
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PlayStation 2



NINTENDO DS

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# Tokyo Game Show 2006

>> Cam Shea, Jonathan Ikeda & Daniel Staines

 This year's Tokyo Game Show saw Sony's PlayStation 3 formerly introduced to the Japanese press and public, where almost 200,000 people had a chance to experience the console first-hand. While the system has copped a lot of flak over the last year and a half, it had a great show, with a surprisingly large array of solid titles on the way. It wasn't all about Sony's monster machine, though – several softcos had kooky Wii demonstration areas (Sega's lovely Monkey Ball girls, playing Banana Blitz on shifts, were the pick of the bunch) and there were enough interesting PS2, Xbox 360, DS and PSP games on show to whet even the most finicky of appetites. What was also interesting was seeing the vast inroads mobile gaming has made into TGS – everywhere you looked there were games for mobile on display. We're still not sold. Weaving through the freak-out cosplayers and blinking booth babe mannequins, we found a wealth of great new titles to get the gaming blood pumping. Over the next 12 pages we present some of the best.



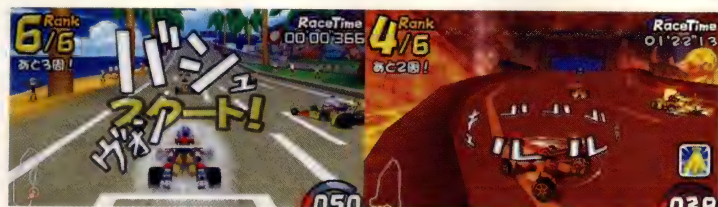
## Armored Core 4

PS3, Xbox 360  
By FromSoftware  
Due Early 2007

Armored Core 4 is looking awesome, it's that simple. While we haven't gone hands on with it yet, what we've seen has left us in little doubt that this will be the mech game to get. Effortlessly capturing both hyper-mobile explosive action and the sheer weight involved in throwing hulking great chunks of metal through the air, Armored Core 4 looks visceral and satisfying. Set against a hazy orange desert city backdrop, mechs strafed around each other, carving great rifts in the sandy ground before jetting into the sky, continuing the game of high speed cat and mouse high above the ground, boosting effortlessly to evade the dozens of missiles and thousands of rounds blazing through the sky. This one is looking really next gen, and a whole lot more promising than the lukewarm Gundam: Crossfire PS3 title. **CS**



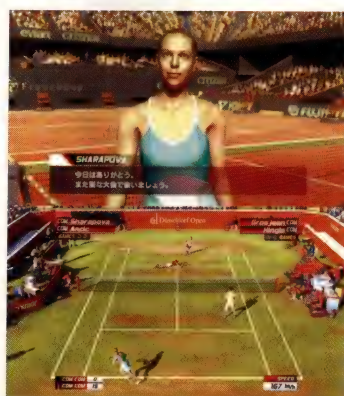




## Ape Escape Racer

PSP  
By Sony  
Due TBA

Just when we thought Mario Kart clones had been safely stowed in the trunk of forgotten gaming memories, Sony brought this one out of the hold-all and on to the TGS tracks. Good news is, it's better - and with much more evidence of imaginative design - than most games of its type. Yes, there are apes and they are in karts, but there are also weird and wonderful items (disco balls and confetti with which to slow down other racers, for instance) and there is enough inventive course design (bridges leading up from the middle of the track to provide alternate routes, etc) to suggest that the finished game might well provide PS2 owners with a decent alternative to Mario Kart DS. Multiplayer options are all in place, too, although they weren't available in the TGS build. Even in its current form, though, Ape Escape Racer looks the part - technically, it's on a par with the best PS2 kart racers, and plays very well, with the weight of the karts and their handling set up so that you can really throw them round the track. Best of all, it captures the humour and charm of the Ape Escape series - and belts it in to a little go-kart. Nifty. **JI**



## Virtua Tennis 3

PS3, Xbox 360  
By Sega AM2  
Due Early 2007

Of all the PS3 games on display at TGS, this was the one which I most wanted to take home and play the life out of. It's not only a perfect showcase for the PlayStation 3's hi-def capabilities (it was running at a full 1080p and 60 frames per second, looking unbelievably good as a result), but it's also a lesson in how to make sports game sequels. Of course there are more players and courts, and the single player game has been expanded dramatically through transformation into a bona fide career mode, but more than all that, Virtua Tennis 3 has the best aspects of its two predecessors' gameplay - and apparently, none of their flaws. Opponent AI has been improved markedly, and I was able to have some gripping rallies with computer-controlled players who seemingly picked up on my habits and style of play. It's unusual for a tennis game to be great in single-player form, but Virtua Tennis 3 is. **JI**



## Coded Arms Assault

PS3  
By Konami  
Due Mid 2007

This game had one of the coolest trailers at TGS this year, which unfortunately meant that playing it was always going to be a bit of a letdown. Nonetheless, looking past some fairly derivative FPS gameplay, Coded Arms Assault has enough cool elements to at least give itself a fighting chance. You play a hacker trying to take down Globo-Chem (or some other evil corporation) so the entire game takes place in a digital space. Wherever you look you'll see data lines scanning along, while gunplay sees impact points bloom into orange grids and enemies dissolve into wireframes. Cooler still, switching weaponry sees it loaded in from a wireframe into your hands. The environment is predictably urban - neon signs, rain slicked streets and barricades, while gameplay was fun enough, but obviously still very early - the single player code had a tendency to freeze when switching weapons or opening doors, while multiplayer was essentially a slide show. Shows some promise. **CS**



## PaRappa the Rapper

With Sony already having outlined a rough plan to release PSone classics for the PSP through a download system, we can't really see the point in developing and releasing a new version of any old PlayStation game - not even the very classic PaRappa. But then again, this isn't a mere re-release; it's a remix. There was only one level playable at the Tokyo Game Show, but it featured Chop Chop Master Onion in fine form and I therefore left the demo wearing a smile. The obvious differences between this PSP version and the original are aesthetic: it's running in 16:9 and it's anti-aliased. Trusting the Sony PR spiel, though, there will be a four-player mode in the final version, and it's rumoured that there will be PSP-exclusive stages later on in single-player mode. PaRappa is frankly too much fun to ignore, even nearly a decade after its original release; the prospect of more PaRappa on the PSP is a fine one. And how about some hidden Um Jammer while you're at it Sony? **JI**

PSP  
By Sony Japan  
Due TBA (late 2006 Japan)





## Railfan

PS3  
By Ongakukan  
Due TBA (late 2006 Japan)

The history of Japanese train simulator games stems back to Taito's landmark Densha De GO! arcade machine. In recent years, though, other developers have been setting up rival lines. Sony's Train Simulator Real

series was moderately successful on the PS2, and Railfan - an addition to that series - brings it up to date for early adopters of the PS3. The main difference here is that, for the first time, a Japanese train driving sim journeys outside of Japan: as well as lines in Tokyo and Kyoto/Osaka ("Ooh, look! There's my house!") there is also a large part of the game which is based in Chicago. Although the PS2 versions of this software had photorealistic visuals - they simply used playback of MPEGs shot from the front of Japanese trains at accelerated/decelerated speeds to convey the sensation of actually being there - Railfan goes two steps further, introducing out-of-train footage of your journey. You can see beautiful hi-def footage of your train speeding through a city, from the air or from behind. The trick is, you do control that train. Railfan looks too good to be true - but it is true. How about that? **JI**



## Dead or Alive Xtreme 2

Xbox 360  
By Tecmo  
Due November

One of the least impressive stage dances at this year's Tokyo Game Show was at Tecmo's stand of Hawaiian-style Japanese fillies. They were too cute for words, but they really couldn't dance. It was a bit embarrassing to watch. And you'd think there might be some embarrassment caused by the testosterone-fuelled juvenility of Dead or Alive Xtreme 2, yet, as with Rumble Roses XX at last year's show, this was a game which proved the rule that most gamers can't turn away from digital breasts. (Especially not when they bounce around like this.) So I didn't try to turn away, either, and instead found a game which is coming along nicely but still needs a lot of work. The volleyball and leisure activities are lovelier than they were in the first outing, but the newly added jet ski racing section of Xtreme 2 is lacking. It looks fine - the sunlight and water effects are as good as anything since WaveRace: Blue Storm, but jet ski control is unresponsive and frustrating. The tits are in place; now Tecmo just needs to hone the actual gameplay. **JI**

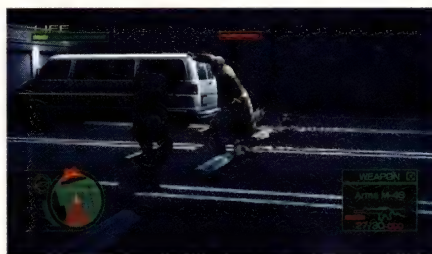


## Sega Golf Club

Featuring the Miyazato Family

PS3  
By Sega  
Due TBA (November Japan)

Maybe it's just because I love Sega more than I love my wife (only joking, dear) or perhaps it's because of an uncanny resemblance to Neo Turf Masters, but either way Sega Golf Club caught my eye. It's not exactly a next-gen looker - it is, in fact, a conversion of an arcade game from late 2004 - but Sega Golf Club seems to capture the seriousness of golf in a fun way, and without any of the gimmicks used by Everybody's Golf or the Mario Golf series. The game's most interesting feature is its swing system: it's all done on the left analogue stick, which simulates the 360-degree range of a player's Real Golf Arms (copyright pending). Put simply, you swing the stick to swing the club. It was a bit tricky to get the hang of this system, but once I'd realised how simple and clever it actually is - and once I'd managed to avoid burying shots in the rough - I found Sega Golf Club to be another Sega PS3 game whispering "Take me home". **JI**



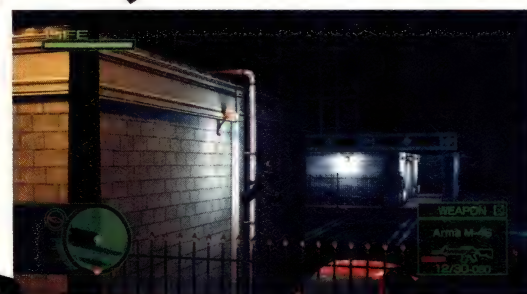
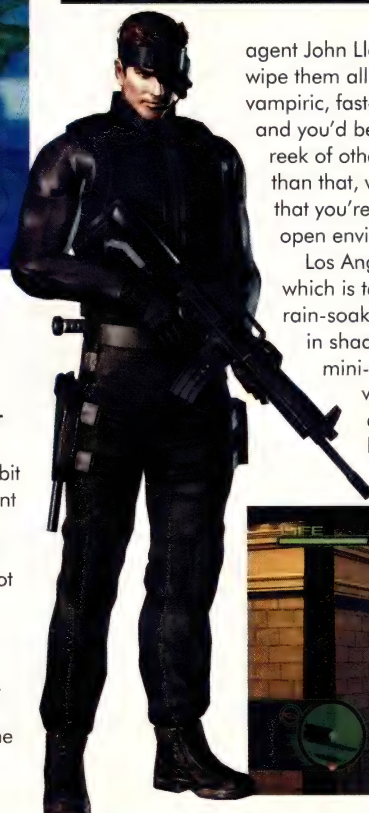
## Rain

PS3, Xbox 360  
By Artoon  
Due 2007

In Los Angeles, there's something worse than death, and they're prowling the streets en masse. As spec ops

agent John Lloyd you're on the team that's assigned to wipe them all out. So what are 'they' specifically? Think vampiric, fast-moving wall-climbing servants of the devil, and you'd be on the right track. While the set-up may reek of other survival horror titles, Rain is actually more than that, with enemies that are so fast and deadly that you're encouraged to use stealth tactics in the open environments to survive.

Los Angeles is a depressing place in its own right, which is taken to a new level in Rain - the dreary rain-soaked urban environments are often cloaked in shadow and shaded in greys, and your handy mini-map shows you each enemy's 'cone of vision', producing a tense game of cat and mouse. Or, erm, spec ops agent and building leaping blood sucking fiend, as the case may be. Looking good. **CS**





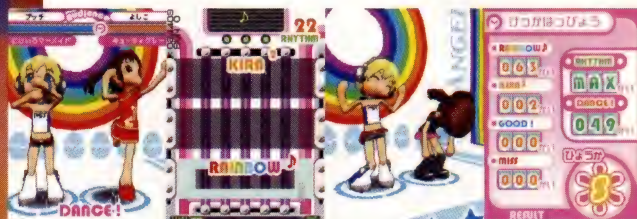
## Kira Kira Music Hour

Tucked away at the back of Sega's booth was a solitary DS demo unit playing this, a rhythm-action title with a name that translates beautifully as Shiny Music Hour. If you cross Dance Dance Revolution and Guitar Freaks, you get this game: three panels are displayed on the touch-screen, which you stroke/tap in time to the J-pop soundtrack, and that makes your dancing girl (pictured on the main screen) groovy. Kira Kira's combo system is excellent, pushing you into a rainbow-packed overdrive mode of disco madness - provided that you keep making the taps as demanded. It's a game which seems to be full of energy, but it has balance too, with the difficulty level progressing nicely from stage to stage. Best of all, by the time you read this Kira Kira Music Hour will be available in Japan. **JI**

DS

By Sega

Due TBA (now Japan)



[left] How many plush animals had to die to make those leg warmers and skirt



本当です。これは私の夢の中で、君だっ私の頭の中で作り出した人物なのです。

## Idol Master

Xbox 360  
By Namco Bandal  
Due TBA

This one's been doing the rounds for some time as an arcade game, but Namco is at last speeding up its development as an Xbox 360 title. Essentially, you're in charge of an idol. ('Idol' is the all-encompassing Japanese term for a female model, soft/hard porn actor, normal actress, and/or pop star.) As the manager of an idol, you get all sorts of perks (I imagine); but as the manager of a digital idol, you just get to pave a career path for her. Still, it's fun. There's plenty of enjoyment to be had from deciding what gigs your girl takes on, dictating how she looks, and managing her (your) bank account. Really, there is! It's also extremely popular at the moment, with queues at Microsoft's TGS booth floating around the hour-long wait mark. Something to build Japanese faith in Microsoft, then? Unlikely, but it can hardly hurt the 360's cause. **JI**



## Eternal Sonata

Xbox 360  
By tri-Crescendo  
Due TBA

Namco seems to be almost diarrhetic in its release of new RPG titles recently. The latest one to drop is this Frederic Chopin-starring Xbox 360 spectacular. It's set in 19th century France and begins at Chopin's deathbed; from there, Eternal Sonata winds through a story which stars a young girl named Polka and brings in additional playable characters, all with the aim of, you know, defeating bosses, leveling up and curing the world's ills. The game's developer has previously worked on Valkyrie Profile and Star Ocean, and you can see that pedigree clearly in Sonata's visual quality - it's one of the loveliest-looking RPGs around, full of lush environments and little details. But pretty pictures alone do not a great game make, and the demo presented at TGS was too short to gauge just how much there is to Eternal Sonata. If its gameplay matches its looks and sounds (a Chopin score, no less, and voice acting from acclaimed Japanese actors), however, it could be a classic. **JI**







## Virtual On

PS2  
By Sega  
Due TBA

The Sega Ages 2500 series of remake compilations for the PS2 has been going down quite successfully in Japan for more than a year now. The latest installment, Volume 30, is a reworking of the arcade and Saturn classic Virtual On, which was playable in early form at TGS. The game is all about battles between huge mech characters inside large, square arenas. The control system, which demands simultaneous use of two joysticks, resulted in the release of special Twin Stick controllers for the Saturn and Dreamcast versions to mimic the coin-op set-up. On the PS2, of course, there's no need for an expensive controller because the Dual Shock 2 will suffice. In fact, playing the original game again - albeit with sharpened graphics and immediately accessible Dual Shock control - reminded us of just how good the first game was, and how mediocre the PS2 game Virtual On Marz was. Knowing Sega, there will also be quite a few Easter eggs in the final code - quite possibly including other versions of the game. This is certainly going to be the one for PS2-owning Virtual On fans to plump for. **J1**



## Jeanne d'Arc

PSP  
By Level 5  
Due 2007 (November 2006 Japan)

One of the most promising looking tactical RPGs for PSP on the horizon, Jeanne d'Arc takes the story of Joan of Arc and spices it up somewhat. England and France are still at war, with Joan leaving her town to join the French campaign, but this is a world full of magic and ancient powers, of monsters and demon armies.

With a familiar turn-based battle system as its starting point, Jeanne d'Arc introduces some cool elements, such as group bonuses. Keep your units close and you'll get a defense bonus as they can all help repel an attack. Likewise, there are attacking bonuses for surrounding enemies. Character development is handled via skill stones. Six can be equipped at once, and there are four basic types (stat boosts, special attacks, magic and beneficial status), from which you'll be able to tailor your character. There'll also be a crafting system of some sort for the skill stones.

While the intricacies of battle are still something of a mystery (due in part to a short play time, but mostly thanks to my stinky Japanese), we really hope Jeanne d'Arc sees a Western release. **CS**



## It's A Wonderful World

DS  
By Square Enix  
Due TBA

No one was really expecting Square to get into the beat 'em up ring again after Ergheiz, but It's A Wonderful World edges in that direction. The trailer shown at TGS looked like a Treasure game in many ways (think Rakugaki Showtime meets Sin & Punishment): it's a heavily stylised 2D fighter-RPG hybrid set in a gritty future world, and the in-battle action is fairly relentless. Apparently, demons are inhabiting the place and making everything go wrong, which is where the game's two protagonists come in - to fight these characters and restore the titular Wonderful World. The fighting here is a mixture of stylus and d-pad control, with sword slashes and gun shots assigned to one character (using the stylus) and magic spells assigned to the other (inputted BeMani-style with the d-pad, following on-screen cues). There's something really old skool about It's A Wonderful World, yet it was also one of the best-looking DS games on show. Wonderful. **J1**



cosplay  
corner



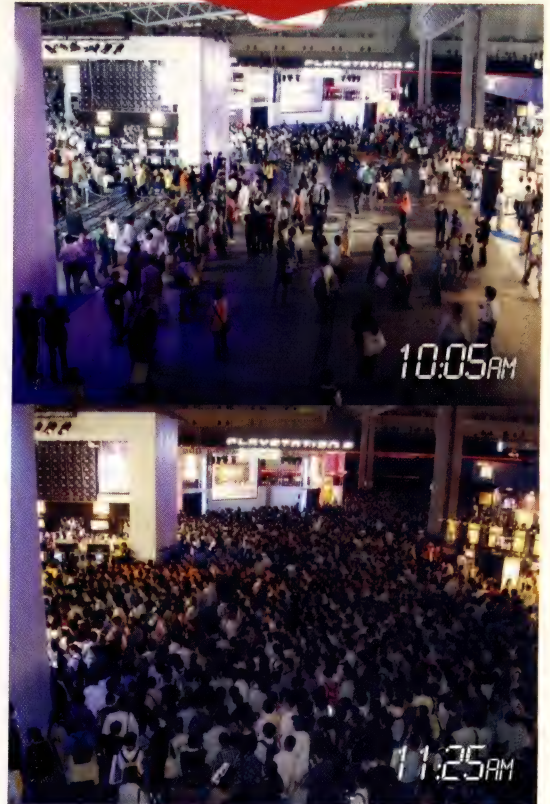


## Winning Eleven DS

DS  
By KCET  
Due December

It seems strange to see Konami's all-conquering soccer series on Nintendo's DS. With only one notable exception (Winning Eleven 6, which made an appearance on the GameCube in Japan) the series has passed by Nintendo systems until now. But it's a sign of how huge the DS market has become in Japan, that developers can't really afford to ignore it. And so Winning Eleven DS is on its way to appease Konami's shareholders. The game uses the touch-screen to allow for quick, mid-game tactical adjustments, which is a particularly excellent feature in multiplayer mode. Graphically, Winning Eleven DS harks back to early PlayStation games in the series (think Winning Eleven 3) and even the gameplay, reliant on the d-pad for lack of an analogue stick, is reminiscent of that old beauty. **J**

## mukohari messe hall mayhem!

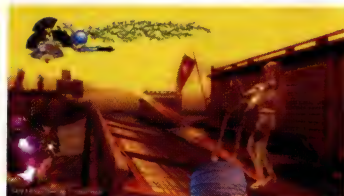


## Lost Odyssey

Many people have commented that by and large "next generation" simply means a significant increase in scale, and Lost Odyssey is a game that really uses this to its advantage. The opening to the TGS demo was epic – massive armies charged at one another across an enormous battlefield, with gameplay weaving in and out of a number of incredible cutscenes. While the gameplay is fairly basic at this stage – select enemy, hit enemy, there's no denying just how cool it is to face off against a ten storey flame spewing war machine while a pitched battle rages in all directions around you.

The lead character of Lost Odyssey is Kaim, a near immortal and complete bad arse, and while we haven't seen any of the other playable characters, we've been told there will be eight in total. Stunning graphics aside, from what we've seen Lost Odyssey treads a pretty tried and true RPG path, with random turn-based battles and plenty of acquisition. **CS**

Xbox 360  
By Mistwalker  
Due 2007



## Genji: Days of the Blade

PS3  
By Game Republic  
Due 2007

The PS3 version of Genji has two major selling points. The first is how gorgeous it looks. We try not to get all goggle-eyed at pretty graphics around here – especially since almost all next-gen games look good in some way or another – but Genji truly does look remarkable. Vibrant colours combine with detailed environments and creative creature design to give the whole thing a very cool feudal Japanese vibe. It's kind of like Okami in a way, but with an emphasis on detail instead of abstraction.

The other big selling point is the Lego Star Wars-style swap-in character system. Basically, there are three main characters that you can switch between on the fly, and – as you'd expect – each character has their own strengths and weaknesses. During our time with the game, we grew especially fond of Benkei: a big fat monk that carries this massive, Monkey Magic style bo-staff with which to club armoured enemies. You know that saying, "speak softly and carry a big stick"? Well Benkei speaks loudly and carries a HUGE stick. He's awesome.

Oh! Almost forgot: there's also a giant crab. Apparently that's like an internet meme now or something, so Wilks made me mention it. So... yeah. There you go. **DS**







His arm extends into this monstrous tentacle thing that launches out and grabs any nearby enemies...



[wherever]  
Hopefully we'll see some more bike riding, sword swinging, pizza eating intro movies



## Devil May Cry 4

PS3  
By Capcom  
Due 2007

Dante is dead. Or at least he might as well be – seeing how he's been booted from the comfy protagonist's chair for this next instalment of Devil May Cry. The new guy in town is named Nero and he's actually a lot like Dante. He's got the same silver hair, the same cocky attitude, the same crazy one-liners... he even wears a cool red trench-coat. But unlike Dante, Nero has some kind of crazy Devil Arm thing happening. You can see it in the images accompanying this preview: notice how his right arm is all glowy and gold? That's because it's a Devil Arm. If you just give me a sec, I'll explain to you what it's all about.

### BETTER THE DEVIL YOU... ARM

Okay, so the first thing about the Devil Arm is that we have no idea how it fits into the story or why Nero has one – the demo we played didn't go into any of that. But what we do know is that it's basically a super-weapon that you can use in a variety of ways to deal damage and boost combos. For example, by simply pressing the circle button, you can make the Devil Arm lash out at the nearest enemy and slam them into the ground. But (and this is where it starts to get cool) if you move the analogue stick while pressing the circle button, Nero will perform a neat Devil Arm technique that acts kind of like a big grappling hook. Basically, his arm extends into this monstrous tentacle thing that launches out and grabs any nearby enemies, dragging them in and setting them up for a flashy combo. It's pretty rad – and the fact that you can use it in the air as well as on the ground makes it very useful for chaining combos together for max rewards and the like.

Of course, aside from the whole Devil Arm thing, it must be said that Nero doesn't feel very different from Dante in terms of combat ability. Many of the moves we saw while playing DMC4 are direct replicas of those featured in DMC3. You can still do the faithful four-slash button-mash. You can still do the pop-up slash into air-guns combo. You can still do the same old Stinger attack (although it's got a bit more range this time). Basically, you can still do pretty much everything you could do in the previous Devil May Cry games – which kind of makes the combat in DMC4 seem a bit... samey.

Which is not necessarily a bad thing, but still – it's wasted potential. Why introduce this new character if he's going to play almost identically to Dante? Capcom

claims that there'll be some kind of "acceleration system" added to the final game that alleviates this problem to a certain degree, but we didn't see any evidence of that at TGS. Maybe they couldn't get it in on time? I dunno. The rest of the demo seemed pretty complete, so it seems odd that they'd leave out what you'd think would be one of the most important aspects of the game.

Oh well. I guess the most important thing for any game is that it's fun – and DMC4 (at least so far) is definitely that. We just hope Capcom manage to spice it up a bit before release. **DS**







[Everywhere]  
NINJAS!  
THOUSANDS  
OF THEM!



## Ninja Gaiden Sigma

PS3

By Team Ninja

Due 2007

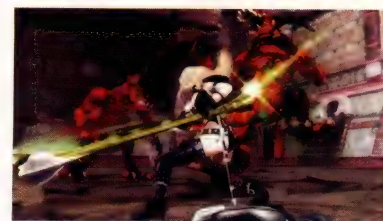
No, it's not Ninja Gaiden 2, it's Ninja Gaiden Sigma. Team Ninja are taking their much loved and fiercely difficult action game Ninja Gaiden Black, and giving it a serious makeover on PS3. As you can tell from the screenshots, this game is pants wettingly gorgeous – with a new engine designed to take full advantage of the PS3's hardware, but of course, that's not where the improvements stop. Although the game will follow the same series of events as the original, this will be more of a remix than a pretty port, with changes to levels, combat and AI. If you've seen the trailer you would have already noticed Ryu facing off against a couple of familiar characters in new settings – such as battling a dual pistol wielding Gamov, but that's just the beginning.

Rachel is now a playable character, and Team Ninja are designing a separate set of missions for her, allowing you to see the Ninja Gaiden story from a different perspective. Combat – particularly for projectiles – has been tightened and tweaked, and there's already one significant new inclusion that we know of – dual wielding katanas, which should be awesome fun. Enemies and bosses will both be revisited: the team is particularly focused on improving the AI to provide more sophisticated enemy behaviour (although this doesn't necessarily mean the game will be harder). Animations are being tightened, and Ryu has some cool new abilities, such as not only being able to run on water, but fight on water too – boo ya! Now that's a goddamn ninja! Team Ninja have also confirmed that they will be using the controller's tilt technology, but haven't revealed in what capacity.

Another cool change is that the team are revisiting cutscenes from the original and recreating them in real-time, and giving the player control. Remember the cutscene in the first game where Doku burnt down the shrine in Hayabusa village in search of the Dark Dragon blade? Well for the sequel that scene will be in real-time and you'll be able to duke it out with Doku yourself. The footage we've seen inside the burning shrine looks absolutely incredible – you can almost feel the intensity of the heat as the flames lick at the building, beams fall to the ground and lit embers swirl in the hazy air. It's a testament to the horsepower of the PS3 that last generation's cutscene is this generation's real-time. We can't wait. **CS**



Rachel is now a  
playable character...  
with a separate set  
of missions





## Blue Dragon

Xbox 360  
By Mistwalker  
Due 2007

Given how popular the Dragon Quest series is in Japan it's really no surprise to see DQ VIII's character designer Akira Toriyama roped in to work his magic on Blue Dragon. It is, after all, one of the two games (along with Mistwalker's other title Lost Odyssey) that Microsoft hope will help the Xbox 360 crack the massive Japanese RPG market. So yeah, Blue Dragon doesn't exactly have a unique set of characters, but thankfully what it does have is buckets of charm backed up by incredible cutscenes and gorgeous in-game design.

While the lead character Shu may have predictably spiky hair, he also has a f\*\*k-off big shadow dragon to do his fighting for him, and in our books that's pretty cool. Each character in your party, in fact, has their own shadow that rears up behind them during the (thankfully not random) turn-based combat in the game. It's the Blue Dragon equivalent of being able to say "Punch, Giant Robot!" and have death dispensed before your eyes. Other than Shu's blue dragon, the three other party members had a hawk-like shadow, a genie-like shadow and a shadow with massive horns, each of which has its own abilities and attacks. Speaking of which, the attack animations are all suitably over the top and cinematic, and after seeing one of Shu's Level 70 attacks where his dragon rains molten chunks down on an enemy in an awesome display of power, we were sold.

Enemies range from a legion of cool retro robots through to birds and butterflies, and we have to say that while the lead characters may be archetypal, the enemy designs are really great, and the bosses are absolutely massive. One of the demos also featured a neat little on-rails shooter mini-game as Shu's airship pursues a boss.

Blue Dragon is definitely one to watch. **CS**



**[Above and Below]** You can actually play the full game of Blue Dragon from the retail copy instead of having to buy it piecemeal. Wow!



## Gran Turismo HD

PS3  
By Polyphony Digital  
Due TBA (December 2006 Japan)

Polyphony Digital unveiled a rather contentious plan for Gran Turismo HD at TGS, whereby the cost of the game at retail will be very low, with the vast majority of content available for purchase online via microtransactions. There will be two modes – Premium, which will be like a true high def sneak peek at Gran Turismo 5 (due on PS3 in 2008) and will contain 30 cars and two tracks (with another 30 cars and one more track available online), while Classic is the head to head online component (and presumably uses updated GT4 assets) which will come with no content. Anything you want for Classic will have to be paid for online, and the team are shooting for 770 cars, 51 courses and numerous other items. So, how much is content going to cost? Well, for the Japanese launch, cars for Classic will cost 50-100 yen (AU 56c - \$1.12) and courses will be 200-500 yen (AU \$2.23 - \$5.57). It doesn't sound like much, and for the cautious investor doesn't have to be. Our concerns, however, are twofold. Firstly, the hardcore GT players will want it all, which could wind up being a huge sum of money, and secondly, where's the reward system? Players who dedicate huge amounts of time to a game are rewarded by unlocking new content (or being able to afford it using in-game currency). Once everything is available for a price, with no skill required, doesn't that defeat the purpose of the game? Sony are obviously treading cautiously, building the purchasing into the online component rather than single player, but it's still a trend that could ruin the carefully structured reward systems of many games. Downloading new songs for Singstar – that makes sense. GT HD? Well, the jury is still out.

Other news that has us both excited and a little worried is that vehicle damage will become available as a download for the game some time in 2007, while the team will also be releasing an update with more advanced AI. While both of these are undoubtedly good news for the series, shouldn't they be included out of the box? They sound suspiciously like patches to us, allowing the team to put out the game in an unfinished state then releasing important components later on. It's a worrying sign, but I guess the upshot is that we'll be playing GT HD sooner rather than later. **CS**



# Resistance: Fall of Man

Resistance: Fall of Man is a game of two halves: single player and multiplayer. We got a taste of both at this year's TGS, albeit in depressingly limited quantities. Damn time-limited demos!

Based on what we've seen so far, it seems fair to say that Fall of Man's single player will play kind of like a cross between Halo, Medal Of Honour and Ratchet & Clank. As we made our way through the demo, glorious set-piece battles in a devastated English country-side gradually gave way to claustrophobic corridor shoot-outs with gangs of alien enemies whose bastard-smart AI made them incredibly difficult to kill. Perhaps too difficult. There's a fine line between 'challenging' and 'frustrating', and it seems Fall of Man has crossed it several times over. Or we might just be crap at it – that's entirely possible too.

At any rate, even if we are crap at the single player, we at least managed to kick arse in the multiplayer. Supporting up to 40 players simultaneously, Fall of Man's online mode includes three main game types: Deathmatch (which also comes in team variety), Breach, and Meltdown. Breach – which is the gamemode we played – centres around two reactors, with the idea being that each team has to destroy the enemy reactor before the round ends. The rub is that there are also five 'nodes' that can be captured during the course of the game, with each node granting the team that captures it bonuses such as radar and defence turrets. It's an interesting take on an old formula and one that works really well with the large volume of players Fall of Man is capable of supporting.

As it stands, Fall of Man looks to be THE big PS3 launch title. Some excitable pundits have even gone so far to call it Sony's Halo-killer. We don't know about that – but we do know that we like what we've seen so far. We like it a lot. **DS**

PS3  
By Insomniac Games  
Due Launch



[below] The real reason why Cam is so fond of the Ridge Racer series

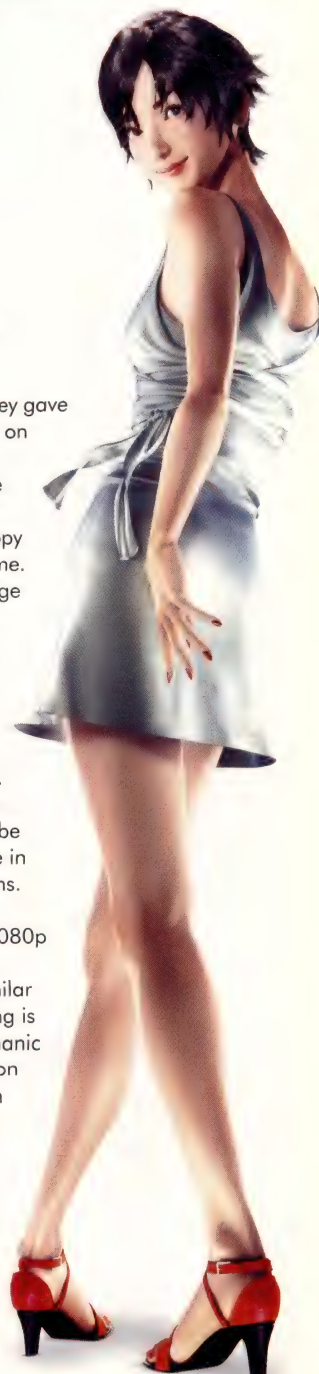
# Ridge Racer 7

PS3  
By Namco  
Due Launch

You guys all know that the Hyper Crew and the Ridge Racer series are pretty tight. Like old school friends we've supported one another over the years. Ol' Ridgey gave us an arcade adrenalin laced shoulder to lean on when we were feeling down, while we, in turn, tried not to let him get too depressed during the whole R: Racing debacle. Point is, we're Ridge Racer fans, so for the most part we're quite happy that Ridge Racer 7 is essentially more of the same. Whereas for those that don't like this series, Ridge 7 sure as hell isn't going to change your mind.

That said, there are a few changes under the hood that fans will appreciate. There's going to be a heavy emphasis on customisation for instance, allowing you to change both your car's appearance (paint jobs, rims and body kits), and its performance. This will be especially important to bring some spice to the game's online functionality. You'll be able to bring your custom ride online and race in fields of up to 14, either individually or in teams. There will also be full online leaderboards.

At TGS the demo was running at 60fps in 1080p which, frankly, made bugger all difference. In terms of visual fidelity the game looks very similar to Ridge Racer 6 on Xbox 360 and the handling is basically identical. As expected the Nitro mechanic returns, but thankfully there is one new inclusion – you can now draft behind opponents to earn a speed boost and stream past them. The final game will have 20 or more courses, so we hope Namco really go to town on them because although the course we played was fun, taking us past a giant Buddha statue, through a nicely lit and textured cave, and of course, blazing along more tropical trails, it's not exactly a leap for the series. **CS**





**Lair**

PS3  
By Factor 5  
Due TBA

At TGS we caught up with **Julian Eggebrecht**, the CEO of renowned development team Factor 5. Once strongly allied with Nintendo and responsible for some of the most classic Star Wars games on N64 and GameCube - such as *Rogue Squadron* and *Rogue Leader*, Julian and his team are now hard at work on the promising PS3 title *Lair*. In it, you play a dragon rider, fighting in a world on the brink of extinction. The gameworld is sweeping (most areas are 32km by 32km) and gritty, with large armies battling it out in pitched combat below, while you patrol the skies, battling other dragons above, occasionally swooping down to give the infantry some support. Julian is the Director on *Lair*, and had some very interesting things to say...

**HYPER: How helpful has Factor 5's past experience with games like *Rogue Squadron* been for *Lair*?**

**Julian:** It's helped us in so far as I think with *Rebel Strike* we realised that a) we need to be able to go seamlessly from ground to air if we want to advance the genre in any way, because *Rebel Strike* couldn't do it, and that was a big drawback in the game because it was so linear, and then b) we also saw that having worked for years and years on craft based games that the genre has kind of hit the wall. For us at least, because we kind of perfected the thing - you can't do much more with a frickin' X-Wing! You can replace it with different craft but it will still be essentially the same. So for us it was, well, how can we mix and match this desire to do a little bit more sandboxy seamless air to ground gameplay with an advance in the air side of things. And that's basically when it hit us - dragons, because you've got a living creature, and that suddenly opens up a ton of new realms.

**In terms of other games that have attempted to do a similar thing such as *Drakengard*, what were the failings that you saw in those games? Why didn't they work?**

Did we ever really analyse that? To be quite honest, and that isn't meant to sound arrogant, but I think I looked at *Drakengard* for about ten seconds or something. Honestly, it was so stereotypical. The only game which we consciously and almost automatically stayed away from was *Panzer Dragoon*, because the style is very different from our style and secondly *Panzer Dragoon* is essentially on rails, and has a lock-on system, so we didn't want to do a lock-on system à la *Panzer Dragoon*. We also didn't want to do *Rogue Squadron* rapid fire fireballs - it would be stupid, it would be like a craft again. And we always knew right from the get-go that since we did have creatures - that somehow what every other game which has tried dragons didn't really get - is the fact that fireballs are the long range weapons, but then you get closer in, and these are living creatures, so do something with them closely together. It took a lot of R&Ding to get to gameplay mechanisms and systems which actually work for the player. How you actually get closer and closer and closer and you get more visceral in the combat. But I think in the end we've found a way there, with the lock-on and the close combat where you really fight it out.

**Were you pleased when Sony announced the tilt mechanism? Did you instantly think that this would be perfect for the game?**

The story is a little bit the other way around actually. I know that a lot of the teams were kind of caught by surprise, but we were actually in communication with the controller designers way way way in the past. So, I had





a meeting I remember back then, because on GameCube we were already hoping that Nintendo would do it. Because obviously it's been on the drawing board for all the manufacturers for a number of years, and on GameCube for Rogue Leader I would have loved to have it. But in the end it wasn't physically possible at the time, so on the PlayStation 3, immediately when we had the early hardware meetings I was like "please guys, put in the motion control thing. It needs to work this time and we've got the perfect title to showcase it". So then they went into this whole R&D cycle and for a long time we didn't hear anything, and I always had two different designs for Lair. One was completely with the stick control which we worked on for quite a while, and one was built completely around the motion control. And then when we heard that 'oh, they're really going ahead and they're doing it' we very quickly adapted everything to the motion control and we never looked back.

**In that regard, what do you think the motion control adds to the game that wasn't present in the original stick design?**

On a very minute detail level, one of accessibility problems for people with flight games is that you have a huge range of motion with the 360 degree flight but you've only got a tiny motion on the analogue stick, which is also one of the problems - slightly less though - for racing games. The moment you've got the tilt control, you've got the full range of your wrists, basically giving you the complete control over the beast. So one of the things we've found is that people who didn't find flight games accessible before, suddenly when we put it on the tilt, your basic controls, suddenly could fly the dragon pretty well. That was the first



**[Above]**  
Dragons, and  
nary a Dungeon  
in sight thank god

step, then the second step is, well, you're riding a dragon which is kind of like a horse, so you're holding the reigns. So what can you do in terms of simplifying your button layout? So that basically you get natural feeling gestures interpreted to get rid of this myriad of button combinations. So that was the next step then. So you want to do a 180, so what would you do? You'd grip on the reigns. So what you would do on the controller is this [pulls back on controller] and the dragon does a flip. If you want to scoot forward towards something you just punch down, and boom, it does that. If you are in close combat with a dragon, you want to hit him, so why do you have to use a button? You can also do this [thrusts towards opponent] or if somebody's shooting at you, you can do a dodge. So it minimised our buttons down to literally, most of the time, we're only using two buttons, which was fantastic because it made all these different things a) more accessible but b) it also felt as if you are actually riding the dragon and holding the reigns. So it was kind of perfect really for the project.

**How will you know when to land and help out your army?**

There's a morale meter at the top, so you can see how the morale of your army is progressing or going down. So you have to figure out 'oh, if I land right now and I slaughter a couple of the other guys' that actually builds up the morale, 'but oh shit, the dragons are flying in and taking out all these soldiers, so now I'm going to have to get into the air'. So it's the whole seamlessness that the PlayStation 3 makes possible, opens up all of these possibilities for sandbox type gameplay.

**You have a world with dragons in it. Have you tried to avoid being constrained by typical medieval/fantasy design? What kind of world is Lair set in?**

I personally hate every single visualisation and implementation of dragons I've seen in either games or traditional media anywhere. I hate fantasy, personally. I'm a science fiction geek, so you can get me with Star Wars any time. Maybe that's why I worked on it for ten years! So my take on it was, if I work on fantasy, I did get the gameplay possibilities for the dragons immediately, because that's the obvious one. But I said, okay, if I can somehow come up with a take on fantasy, with a reinvention of fantasy and dragons, in a way that I wouldn't cringe, then hopefully a few more people will get access to it, and that's there on the screen. If you agree, I don't know, but at least a hell of a lot of people have now said 'well, I never have seen it that way', so hopefully there's something. At least I can relate to it.

I personally hate every  
single visualisation and  
implentation of dragons  
I've seen... anywhere



# ALAN WAKE

SYSTEM: **PC/XBOX 360** ■ CATEGORY: **THIRD PERSON THRILLER** ■ PLAYERS: **1** ■ DEVELOPER: **REMEDY** ■ DUE: **TBA**

There's something sublimely unsettling about flying half way across the world, being jetlagged and then walking into a darkened room only to be confronted by Max Payne. I don't mean some cardboard cutout of the character, a screenshot of the game or something as mundane as that. I mean Max Payne. In the flesh. Sam Lake, lead writer for Remedy was the face of the original Max Payne. Sure he may not look quite as constipated in real life as he does in the game but he is still unmistakable. Speaking in his rather melodic Finnish accent, Sam reiterated what we already knew about their new IP Alan Wake; that it is an all new IP, an "intense psychological thriller" and will be using an episodic format like a TV series. Pretty words for sure but we didn't travel for so many hours for simple words. We wanted to see the game itself. We came in not knowing anything substantial about Alan Wake aside from the fact that Alan really isn't a leading man kind of name, aside from if

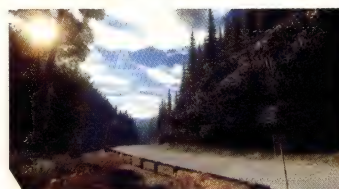
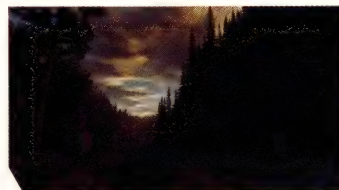
you're Alan Alda or that delightful Alan Thicke (no offence to all the Alans out there) so we had no real expectations for the game. To say that the ten or so other journalists I went into the session with left with the same kind of awe and wonder that I did would be something of an understatement. Alan Wake simply blew us away from the first moment the demo began to roll.

## XANAX AND A LIE DOWN

After a beautiful credits sequence complete with moody music and hand written titles we were given some of the back story to the game. Players take the role of the titular Alan Wake, a formerly successful horror novelist who has hit on hard times. Wake's fiancé and muse has mysteriously disappeared without a trace in events that eerily echo those in his best selling novel, and since then he has been plagued with crippling writers block, insomnia and terrifying nightmares when he finally does get to sleep. To make matters even worse, Wake begins

to find himself blacking out and awakening to find passages in his notebook that he has no memory of writing, all of which seem to be coming true in real life. In an effort to combat his psychological ailments, Alan decides to seek treatment at a renowned sleep clinic located in Bright Falls, Washington.

The demo began with a few quick pans over the town of Bright Falls and the surrounding areas, a rather massive area measuring 10km x 10km. It's a beautifully detailed game world from the gently



WAKE'S FIANCE AND MUSE HAS  
DISAPPEARED IN EVENTS THAT  
EERILY ECHO THOSE IN HIS NOVEL



undulating trees that look like actual trees rather than spiky modern art, gentle rivers, an amazing day/night cycle and real weather. After zooming around the terrain for a few moments, more than willing to show off their amazing engine (reportedly



Wake up Alan!  
You're missing all  
the fun now. Wake  
up Alan!



Not a member of  
the Remedy team  
- that we know of

running DX10) the camera finally came to alight on Alan Wake himself, another of the wonderfully evocative looking character models that Remedy seem so good at creating. Slightly hunched, dressed against the cold and the wind, and with eyes ringed by bags and personal demons, Wake stands on a hilltop surveying his surroundings. It's as good an introduction to a character as you could hope for.

#### IT'S ALWAYS A CABIN IN THE MOUNTAINS

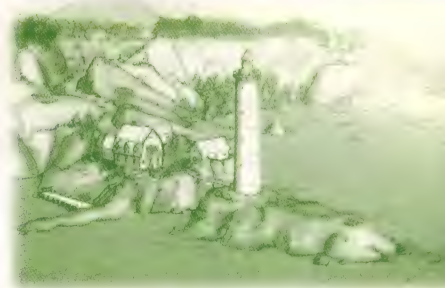
The game is played from a third person perspective similar to that of Max Payne, although the screen is noticeably devoid of the usual HUD. Instead players get the occasional hand writing mission briefing and Wake's own internal narrative to let them know what to do. Although we have only seen a brief amount of gameplay the use of first person narrative looks as though it will work very nicely for both exposition and immersion. After a little running around showing off

the character animations and cloth physics of Alan's flapping coat, the first actual gameplay segment of the demo began with Alan talking to a gas station attendant who tells him to head on up to the cabin in the nearby mountains. Jumping in a 4WD, Wake begins the drive up the mountains. We haven't had any hands on time with the game but from what we were shown the driving engine looks solid and realistic. More importantly it was also explained to us that as well as utilising the episodic narrative, Alan Wake is going to be an open world game in which players can approach the story as they see fit and will have ample opportunities to explore the mysteries of Bright Falls and be rewarded for their inquisitiveness.

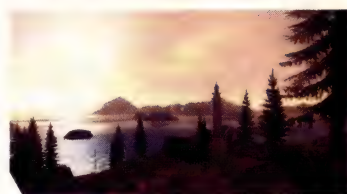
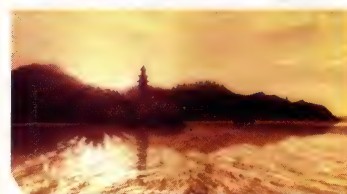
During the drive up the mountains the voiceover kicked in, explaining how the drive seems to mimic a passage in his notebook, if only a hitchhiker would appear. Lo and behold a stranger with his thumb out does turn up and, contrary to conventional wisdom, Wake picks him up. Just as we begin to internally groan at the "coincidence", the voiceover, with immaculate comic timing laconically says "creepy". Alan comments to his passenger that in his book a man picks up a strange hitchhiker. The hitcher assumes he's meant to be the killer in the story but Wake sets him straight telling him that in fact it is the hitchhiker who dies. A little further up the road Alan comes across what appears to be the scene of a hit and run accident. A body lays bloodied in the centre of the road (a body that seems to be dressed almost identically to Alan Wake) and our hero goes to investigate. Shortly after he gets out of the car an out of control truck slams into it killing the hitchhiker, proving more of

the mysterious written notes to be true. To make things even stranger the body on the road is no longer there and Alan remembers the next part of the writing that says that the hitchhiker will stalk him in some fashion, before finally passing out.

It's dark when Wake finally comes to, a time where things in the game are going to get exceptionally creepy. With nowhere to go but the cabin, Wake sets off up the road to a rope bridge. The only illumination aside from Alan's torch is streetlights casting little motes of brightness in the inky black, but every time Alan nears one they explode and die. Running towards the cabin (the windows inexplicably illuminated for a place that is supposedly empty) with the lights exploding around him, Wake turns to see a shadowy figure following him. Is it the hitchhiker somehow returned from the dead or is it something else? We won't know for a while because that's where the demo ended. What we do know is that light will be your greatest ally during the game. Apparently only Alan can see the mysterious shadowy figures and the beam of a torch can show something as it really is. We're not sure how this mechanic will work but we're more than anxious to find out.



Welcome to scenic  
Bright Falls...



[above] Real time weather  
and day/night cycles are  
even more impressive in  
motion



Add a little electrical  
tape and you're on  
to a winner





I looked into the  
Irap Ray

## ALAN WAKE

continued

### WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

How about some more  
info on the tech behind  
the game? Stay tuned!



Inspiration Point

### ALAN IN THE DARK

Although it was only really talked about briefly during the demo and wasn't actually shown, one of the most intriguing aspects of Alan Wake is the structure. Whereas Max Payne and its sequel utilised a heavily plotted and rather linear filmic structure to tell the story and keep players intrigued, Alan Wake is going to use a more television styled structure. What this means is that the action is going to be broken down into a number of chapters or episodes, each with a beginning, middle and (cliffhanger) ending. Remedy has been criticised in the past for making short games — Max Payne

» THE ENGINE IS EFFORTLESSLY BEAUTIFUL... AND THE PHYSICS INTEGRATION IS INCREDIBLE «

2: The Fall of Max Payne could be finished within around eight hours — but such is the downfall of a filmic approach. The episodic approach has the potential to greatly increase gameplay time as well as allow for more exposition. As each episode is essentially self contained, the story of Alan Wake can be dealt in measured bursts rather than force fed to the player.

Along with Assassin's Creed and BioShock, Alan Wake is one

of the few games we've seen that practically screams "next generation". The engine is effortlessly beautiful with massive draw distances and no pop up (that we've seen anyway) and the physics integration is incredible, as demonstrated to us via a twister set off in a trailer park. Instead of just picking up objects and hurling them around, the twister acted like they do in real life, picking up smaller objects but tearing up buildings, sucking them up piece by piece until they are destroyed. Even larger objects were tossed around in a realistic and chaotic fashion. If Remedy can achieve a story as good as the technology then they are on to a winner. Signs so far are definitely positive; what



we've seen of the story makes us think of Twin Peaks by way of Lovecraft (or maybe Silent Hill if you're not of a literary bent) and Sam Lake has a pretty damn good track record with the scripts of Max Payne and its sequel. So far there is no set date for Alan Wake but don't expect a finished product until most probably late 2007 or early 2008. We'll definitely have more before then.

**DANIEL WILKS**

He needs one  
of those super  
powered X-Files  
torches





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**WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:**  
A selection of fun side-missions like rooftop leaping races, car tossing comps etc.

# CRACKDOWN

SYSTEM: XBOX 360 ■ CATEGORY: OPEN-WORLD ■ PLAYERS: 1-MULTI ■ DEVELOPER: REAL TIME WORLDS ■ DUE: Q1 2007

Although it originally appeared to be something of a cel-shaded GTA clone, Crackdown, an Xbox 360 exclusive game in development from Real Time Worlds, is a different kind of animal. Sure, it uses a freeform approach to the action and a large living city to explore but the game, if anything appears to have even less narrative structure than the popular Rockstar franchise. Players take the role of an extra special special-agent ridding the city (actually three interconnected island cities) of crime by tracking down and eliminating the Kingpin of each island.

## KNOCKING OVER THE PINS

Apparently players, if they so choose, could head directly for the kingpin for the final confrontation as soon as they work out where they are hiding but there's a slight rub; each kingpin is the head of a criminal network with numerous major-domos and lieutenants, each of which contributes to the power of the head of the family. The more of these henchmen left alive the more powerful the Kingpin is. As such, gameplay will revolve around tracking down and eliminating the under-bosses before going after the man himself, stopping to clear up street crime and beat up an unimaginable number of gang members along the way.

Although the action of Crackdown at this stage looks a little too simple and straightforward to be able to drive the game for the entire duration, there are some mechanics in play that show great gameplay potential. Throughout the game players will have the opportunity to level up their characters, RPG-lite style, enabling them to aim better, become more proficient with explosives, become stronger so eventually they can toss around cars like toys and increase their agility. This final ability looks as though it has the most fun potential as the higher the player's agility the higher they can jump. At maximum level players are able to leap massive heights and distances. If anyone played Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction they know how much fun such a mode of transport can be. Apparently at the highest level jumping will be almost as fast a mode of transport as driving across the city.

Yep, driving. There are, of course vehicles in Crackdown but there is a clever little mechanic in play that will hopefully keep jumping in a car interesting. Players will have access to five or so agency vehicles ranging from a fast but weak sports car all the way up to a devastatingly powerful truck that will change depending on the level of the player. You read that part



correctly. The agency vehicles in Crackdown actually morph in look and power depending on the power of the player; jump in the sports car at the beginning of the game and it's nothing but a fast and rather soft little coupe but when the player level is maxed out the car transforms into a blisteringly fast, Batmobile-esque wedge with the ability to drive under traffic without harming innocent drivers. The truck starts off as a slow but well armoured and hardy rig and ends as a massive black behemoth capable of crashing through nearly any vehicle in its path. Players will also be able to jack any of the vehicles on the street but as far as we understand it those won't morph.

We're still in two minds about Crackdown. On the one hand the city looks great and jumping about from rooftop to rooftop is a hoot

THE AGENCY VEHICLES  
ACTUALLY MORPH DEPENDING  
ON THE POWER OF THE PLAYER



but we're still not sure if the central mechanics are going to be strong enough to sustain more than a few hours playing time. Hopefully we should receive some preview code fairly soon so we can go hands on to give you a better idea.



# KANE & LYNCH: DEAD MEN

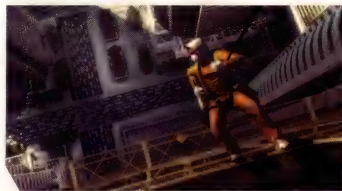
SYSTEM: PC/XBOX 360 ■ CATEGORY: THIRD PERSON ACTION ■ PLAYERS: 1 ■ DEVELOPER: IO INTERACTIVE ■ DUE: 2007



It's kind of nice to see a game in which the two main characters - definitely protagonists as by their actions they definitely can't be called heroes and can barely even be considered as anti-heroes - are decidedly unattractive. We're not talking everyman Sam Fisher style unattractive either. We're talking bucket of chewed arseholes, cross the street to avoid them style unattractive. Greasy mullet, facially scarred, broken-nosed ugly. Whether or not players will be drawn to playing such characters is the topic of another debate; the simple fact that characters like Kane and Lynch exist is great.

## NEVER UGLY UGLY

The ugliness of the characters is more than skin deep. They're not nice people. Without going into the rather impressively detailed back stories of the game, both men are escaped death-row inmates who have actually been sentenced for crimes they have committed. One is a self-medicating schizophrenic sociopath with serious violent tendencies and the other is a cold, professional mercenary with little in the way of moral qualms. They're the original odd couple. They are not good people and from what we've seen there is not going to be a story of redemption, of hookers



with hearts of gold and hitmen with a conscience who are only killing to make money to fund an orphanage for the children whose parents he killed or some similar dross. Kane and Lynch are bad guys, forced by circumstances to work together.

» KANE & LYNCH ARE BAD GUYS, FORCED BY CIRCUMSTANCES TO WORK TOGETHER «



What circumstances you may ask? Well, the back story also tells of a mercenary mission gone wrong. Before the beginning of the game (presumably shown in the opening cutscene when the game is finished) Kane was a member of a secretive, extralegal mercenary outfit called The Seven. During a botched mission in Venezuela, The Seven, barring Kane were thought to have died, leaving Kane to escape with the loot, only to be captured Stateside and imprisoned for his actions. Well, now it appears that The Seven are back, they're more than a little pissed and they want their money. They plan on getting it by forcing Kane and Lynch (how Lynch exactly fits into the

plot aside from being an unlikely partner we're not sure) to retrieve it, threatening to kill Kane's wife and surviving child (Kane became a mercenary after his young son shot himself with his father's gun).

Why all this talk of backstory and so little on the game itself? To be honest there was little to see of the game that showed much in the way of gameplay. What we have seen is almost identical to Hitman: Blood Money in terms of looks but with more frenetic third person combat - quite fitting when you consider that Kane & Lynch is an IO Interactive game and most of the development team of the flawed but still great Freedom Fighters are on the job. From what we've been told, Kane & Lynch: Dead Men will be based around the concept of co-op combat with the player

guiding both Kane and Lynch (or presumably two players in co-op) through numerous gun battles and plot twists. Like we say, we haven't seen enough to tell if this is true at the

current stage but here's one thing we can say with all confidence; Kane & Lynch all but screams ADULT GAME! Whether the gameplay can live up to the hard-bitten premise remains to be seen. <<<

## WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

A little less focus on obscenities to drive the mature themes. How about some mature gameplay?





**WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:**  
The cartoon - apparently  
it's pretty twisted and  
remarkably funny.

SYSTEM: **XBOX 360** ■ CATEGORY: **PIÑATA SIM** ■ PLAYERS: **1** ■ DEVELOPER: **RARE** ■ DUE: **LATE 2006**

➤ In one fell swoop Microsoft have positioned themselves to potentially have the new big thing with the littlies. The new Pokemon, Yu Gi Oh or some other such juggernaut. Already the Viva Piñata cartoon series is tearing up the ratings in the US, paving the way for the game to be remarkably successful before it's even released. Luckily, from what we've seen, Viva Piñata is actually shaping up to be quite a decent looking little game rather than simply a marketing exercise targeted at a young market able to whine to their parents until they cave in and buy them stuff.

#### THE RARE STUFF?

Kind of like a cross between Animal Crossing and My First Sim City, Viva Piñata charges players to attract various forms of lolly filled beasts to your garden through the art of landscaping. When the game begins player are given a rather crusty

looking plot of land and a spade. Rather than using the spade in a more readily understood digging fashion, players can then beat the ground into submission, churning it into lovely freshly turned earth. This in turn attracts your first visitors to the garden, a simple worm like piñata known as a "Whirlm". Initially black and white when it enters the garden, it's up to the player to tend to its needs so it (and the species as a whole) will become a resident in the garden instead of just a visitor. When these demands are met the little buggers morph into coloured versions of themselves, becoming the catalyst needed to entice Sparrowmint piñatas to investigate the garden.

Once piñatas become residents of the garden the player also needs to make them breed to keep populations up, a task achieved by building the requisite breeding grounds and playing a simple mini-game in which you guide one piñata through a maze to meet the other. Somewhat macabrely the demo seemed to hint that one of the cues to get the Sparrowmints breeding is to break open a Whirlm, a task achieved by bashing it repeatedly with a spade until its sweet candy guts are splashed across the ground. Never fear — if "killed" a piñata will respawn

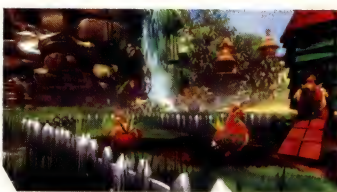


outside the garden as a visitor once more so you should be able to replenish your supplies. It's all very cute and mostly inoffensive and sure to appeal to a demographic far wider than the apparent young target market.

Throughout the game players will be given new tools to improve their garden including grass seeds, upgraded spades, a watering can and the like. With each new tool the level of complexity of the game should increase as players are required to perform more tasks



THERE WILL BE AROUND 40 OR SO PINATAS TO ENTICE INTO YOUR GARDEN...



to attract new piñatas into their garden as well as keep the piñatas already residing in their garden happy. We've heard that there will be around 40 or so piñatas to entice into your garden in all so the action could get quite frantic.

From what we've seen, Viva Piñata is looking like quite an appealing title, especially towards a more mainstream 'casual' gaming crowd. From a visual standpoint the game has an undeniable charm with some very cute piñata models and bright, eye catching primary colours. <<<





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# FORZA MOTOR

**Seamus Byrne** recently spent some time with **Dan Greenawalt**, Design Director on *Forza Motorsport* and the upcoming *Forza 2*, and got some refreshingly earnest opinions on his passion for racing, game physics, *Forza 2*, of course, and why the haters don't know what the hell they're talking about.



## So where to now for Forza?

We haven't yet really approached the vision I've got for *Forza*. We took a good stab at it in version one and I want to take a good stab at it in version two. If all we were going to do is up-res our shit and put it on the new platform, that's damn easy. We want to add features, we want to add new stuff and to do that in less than two years and make a generational leap from the Xbox to the Xbox 360, that is a tall order my friend.

We've got new people on the team; our team has grown exponentially. Our full time count has more than doubled, and we've got more outsourcers. What that has allowed, though, is we're making a generational leap and we're gaining content.

If you look at *Gran Turismo 2* to 3, or if you look at *Project Gotham Racing 2* to 3, when they moved platforms they actually lost some content — fewer cars, fewer tracks. For *Forza* we're actually adding cars, we're adding manufacturers, we're adding tracks. We're going from 230 cars to 300 cars, with new manufacturers such as McLaren and Lamborghini. And when we add new manufacturers, these are manufacturers you can damage, paint, upgrade and tune. So you can now take a Gallardo, if you want, and put a supercharger on it and paint a Hello Kitty paint job on it and then run it into a wall at 160 miles per hour. If you are so

inclined. So, as I said, bigger in every way. Sixty tracks, up from the original forty-five tracks. That includes five new tracks from the real world.

## Your pick of the new tracks?

Personally, as a physics guy, I'm pretty excited about Sebring, because in version one you were talking about, "if you're a good sim then you have to be at 60 frames a second." The problem is I know physics, and I'm like, "That's a load of crap".

Your frame rate is just graphics, your update rate on your physics is something totally different. Now if you so choose to tie the two together — I believe *Gran Turismo* did, so your frame rate and your physics rate are the same, then 60 frames a second is not a good sim. Sixty is far too slow, and a track like Sebring will really show it to you.

Basically, the reason Sebring is tough is because it's an old air strip; it's got all these concrete slabs and over time they've gotten a little bit disjointed, and they've slapped some tar over the top of it, but really if you're in an R8 that only has like 4mm of freaking ground clearance and you're going 200 mph? If you ever watch the American Le Mans race there, the car is just 'Ka ga ga hr!' and the guy's head is just all over the place, 'cause the track is just a monster, it destroys these cars.

In version one we are at 30 frames a second but we updated our physics at 180 sometimes 360 depending on the component, we updated the rate incredibly fast,



[above] All cars are amazingly customisable with thousands of layers to play with





# SPORT 2

and that made it into a hog of a physics system, like the physics system just took up a shitload of our resources, and that's a bit of a problem. Now on the 360 it's a lot less of a problem. So we kind of built a physics system that was future proof. A big, fat physics system that ran really fast and really hot, and now we can have it on a 360 that runs just fine. It ran well on the Xbox, it's just it took up a lot more resources.

If we did run our physics at 60 frames a second you have to add these extra dampers on the whole system because too much force gets applied into the car in 1/60 of a second. So what you end up with is physics that feel kind of sluggish, like molasses, so if you run into a wall and rather than have the car flatten out it actually hits the wall and goes "brrrrrrrr" along the front, or when two cars hit each other - you know you see this in GT right - two cars hit each other and they don't spin each other out, they go "brrrrr mmm brrrrrrrr" [shoving fists together], right, that's cause if you run your physics at 60 frames a second you don't actually have the frequency rate required to do the full amount of force.

So a track like Sebring, it's really going to test the hell out of our physics this time. Especially the way we capture our tracks, I mean we put the GPS on the guys and they go along with the rollers, it takes a whole week of artists taking almost 2000 pictures, we get blueprints, they're using the plumbobs and all sorts of crazy stuff, it's incredible how they capture these tracks. So if halfway down that front straightaway that tarmac is up a little bit from the concrete, yeah, that's there in Forza.

Even in Forza 1 our road textures are incredibly detailed. One of the guys that had joined the Project Gotham team had a buddy who had made this death trap 911, 600 horse power and only, like, 2000 pounds. Anyway he went off at the top of the corkscrew and in Forza there's actually two skid marks going off because we've captured the track the week after he went off. So when we showed it to this buddy of mine, I didn't know that and he was like, "I think I know whose tracks those are!"

**You sound like you're a racing nut.**

I've got a ton of passion for racing cars, and that passion was actually first planted in me by Gran

Turismo 1 on the PlayStation. When I was younger, I didn't play that many games, I played, like, Street Fighter, but I never had a console. And I went over to a buddy's house and was playing GTi and it was a lot of fun. We played through the career together and I was like, "I gotta go buy me one of these". So I got a PlayStation. I got GTi. I played the hell out of it. And it kinda turned me into a gamer, cause I had a PlayStation, and as long as you're going to have one you may as well start buying games like Tomb Raider, and whatever the hell was out at the time. And then I got Gran Turismo 2 and I played the hell out of that.

When I finally got a chance to buy a car that I was agonising over, you know, when you're younger you get cars that are just \$1,000 shitbox cars, right, and like when I first had an opportunity to get a car that I was going to have to worry about, I knew what I was going to get. I got a Mitsubishi 3000 GT VR4. GTi. I learned about that car in that game, it's a 3-litre V6 twin turbo all wheel drive, all wheel steering, active aero. In the game I always drove a white one, so I found myself a white one. I got the windows tinted, I put rims on it. Basically I made my GT car. That game had planted this passion. Once I got into it I started tuning, I kind of became a bit of a garage rat and I started street racing and I broke my car all the time, and did more tuning - that was all me.

And that's what Forza is about. When people are like, "Oh yeah, it's Microsoft's answer to GT", OK, that's what the press would say. But when I pitch the game, and when I talk to my peers, and my team is together, what we're talking about is getting people passionate. You don't do that by copying other games, you do it by coming out with new features that are gonna excite people.



[above] Seamus showing off his new grill (boom tish)

**"IF YOU RUN YOUR PHYSICS AT 60 FRAMES A SECOND YOU DON'T ACTUALLY HAVE THE FREQUENCY RATE REQUIRED TO DO THE FULL AMOUNT OF FORCE"**

The world's changed, also, right. I mean you can get yourself an after market wing, a big old garage can wing for your Civic right now, but you couldn't do that back in the day. The games have to change too, and I didn't want to look at what all these other games are doing, I want to look at what's gonna get people excited. And it's all about that car passion, and that ownership, and that sense of customisation.

That's what we built, you know, a fully customisable racing simulator. We had damage, cause if you're a simulator and you don't have damage, you're not really a simulator, right. So that just went hand in hand there.

And we really tried to build the best game we can. I didn't know how well it was gonna do. But people really dug it, and we got this huge community that grew up in Europe and Asia and North America. Now we're doing a lot more to actually build the community, so we hired a community manager, we have a new website, we're making plans for how we're going to elongate, you know, how the release just keeps going and going and building momentum.

What I really want to do is get, like, dad to play the game and be successful. My dad loves cars. He luuurrrves cars. But every time he just picks up the game and hits gas! And runs into the wall! Well he and I have gone to the track together, he knows how to drive a car. But he's not dexterous with his hands like a gamer is, and he's not getting the cues that he does from really driving a car. So we're missing something.

**Do you think the new wireless steering wheel can help?**

It's kind of funny. Microsoft's a big company, right, fifty thousand



[below] Witty Top Gear style comment

employees last I heard, probably bigger. We're all in insulated little groups. Anyway, I got a mail one day from this guy saying, "Hey, if you guys were gonna have a wheel

car is going to track, it's going to counter steer, and then you're going to snap to oversteer and kill yourself. But for that split second where you let go, it's actually going to track the car with you.

The other cool thing about this is we actually have rumble in this wheel. It sounds kind of minor, right, you've got force feedback, why do you need rumble? The reason you need rumble is because the front tyres are what should be doing the aligning torque so the force feedback motor should be completely dedicated to the front tyres. Well you need to know how high is your engine revving, as well as things like are your rear tyres slipping? So you get the rumble to do that.

**Why do you think it has taken so long for wireless to seriously arrive?**

If you remember when the 360 first got announced we had a wireless controller, there were a whole bunch of haters and fan boys that were all like, "Oh, it's wireless, it's going to be horrible, you're not going to be able to control games, there's going to be all this latency", and you know they're talking shit! They don't know what they're talking about. Sure enough, it comes out, you play Call of Duty, first person shooter, you play GRAW online, there's no lag, you know, you don't need that thing plugged in. And part of that is advancement in wireless technology RF. But part of that is the advancements also come about because a big company like Microsoft puts a lot of time and energy in. And when people are like, "Oh it's going to be bad, like Mad Cats", it's like, "Man, we're not Mad Cats!"

I think the biggest reason really is, when the wireless keyboard first came out and you tried to play a first person shooter, you were just dead, right? I typed faster than it

did its thing. That just gave wireless a bad name for a while. It took a big launch like 360 to come out and say, "Look, wireless doesn't have latency, wireless may just hit the mark".

**What about the decision not to include force feedback in an earlier coding of the game?**

That was a legal decision. Force feedback was owned by Immersion. Just like rumble. Which is why the PlayStation 3 doesn't have rumble, right? They should just settle! I mean, I was playing GT, and they don't have rumble? I'm like, "Come on!" But anyway, we settled with Immersion, so we can do force feedback. If we would have done force feedback without settling then they would have taken us to court and it just would have been expensive. So what it comes down to is at that point, they've got you over a barrel, just give them the money.

**So what's the competition like between yourselves and the Project Gotham guys?**

We've stayed really close. In fact, nothing's going to be able to touch our Live features, 'cause we get their code! They get our code, they beta test our new features, we beta test their new features. We've got two full giant dev teams basically working on new features, that don't have to reinvent the wheel. So you know, when other games are like, "Oh yeah, we're going to do online", its like, "Do online? Man, we did online!" We've been raising the bar... PGR2 with great scoreboards, Forza Motorsport added car clubs, seamless integration, and then PGR3 added Gotham TV and tournaments you can download. Well, that Gotham TV code just came out and plugged into Forza. We hooked it up. Click! We have Forza TV. We just got it free. And it's just going to keep building and building and building. <<

**"THAT GOTHAM TV CODE JUST CAME OUT AND PLUGGED INTO FORZA. WE HOOKED IT UP. CLICK! WE HAVE FORZA TV. WE JUST GOT IT FREE"**

that you were working with what sort of features would you want?", and I was like, "Wait a minute, nobody sends mail like this, are you guys making a wheel?" and they're like "Well maybe we were thinking about it." and I was like, "Just put me on your email list or just invite me to your status meetings. I'll be quiet, I swear. I just want to sit in the back, right."

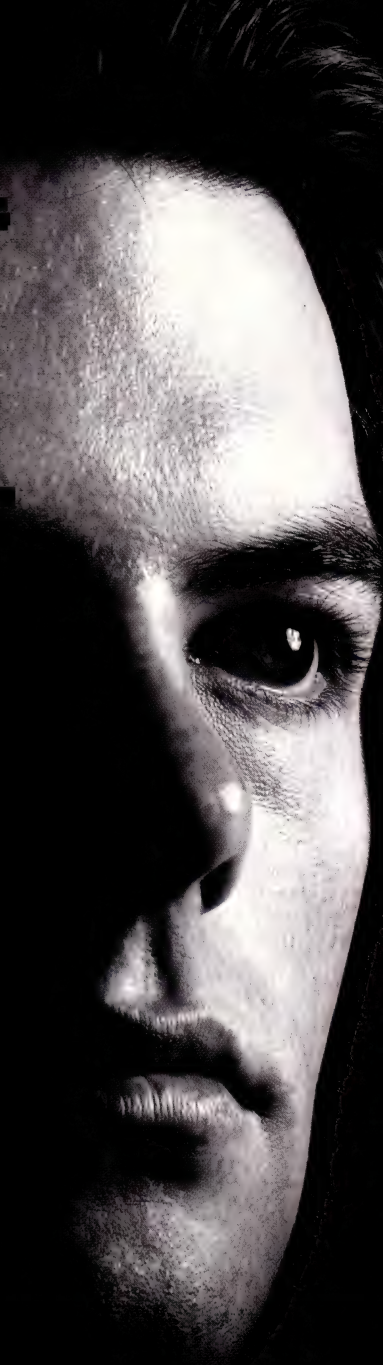
So they started their team and they had a really good mechanical engineer, and a really good design engineer and really good electrical engineers, but they didn't have anyone who understood race car physics. And actually if you look at other wheels out there it's pretty clear they didn't have anyone who understood race car physics either, because they end up basing their force on friction. Force isn't based on friction, it's based on the aligning torque of the wheels. Like a shopping cart, you push a shopping cart and the wheels go backwards, that's the aligning torque. If you increase the castor of the front wheels of your car you're going to increase the aligning torque, if you move the castors backwards the wheels are going to go like this [gestures twist in alignment]. Um, sorry, I like physics.

So, that's something that other wheels just haven't done, so when you start counter steering with most force feedback wheels, and you get right in the pipe, I mean you're really counter steering, you should be able to let go of your wheel, and the

[below] Wireless racing wheels... what an age we live in!







## Q. WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM YOUR UNIVERSITY?

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- C. GREAT SALARY
- D. NO HECS
- E. ALL OF THE ABOVE

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# World of Warcraft: The Burning Crusade

SYSTEM: MAC, PC ■ CATEGORY: MMO EXPANSION ■ PLAYERS: 7 MILLION OR SO ■ DEVELOPER: BLIZZARD ■ DUE: LATE 2006

» After quite a bit of waiting we've finally managed to get our filthy hands on a Beta key for the anxiously anticipated World of Warcraft expansion The Burning Crusade and without hyperbole it's shaping up to be pretty amazing. Sure there are numerous bugs that still need to be ironed out and there are some models that need skins (though it is rather funny to be beaten to death by a blue and white checked placeholder cube) but such small things don't detract from Blizzard's impressive achievement.

## SCORCHED EARTH

Entering the Outlands through the Dark Portal is not a big world event but it has significant impact nonetheless. As soon as you arrive in the Outlands players are dropped into the middle of the war with the Burning Legion. A makeshift forward line blocks the portal from wave upon wave of demons who

throw themselves at the defenders. In amidst this the player is sent to send a message to their respective faction area commanders, hopping on the nearest flight path and flying to the closest friendly camp, soaring over the blasted landscape, various demons and, if you're lucky, the enormous Fel Reaver, a giant, level 70+ elite mechanical roaming mob that patrols the entire zone. It's the new Devilsaur, though it has a slightly harder time sneaking up on you; every movement causes

the earth to shake and it emits high pitched metallic screams.

Hellfire Peninsula, the starting area, is roughly the size of the Western Plague Lands in Azeroth and serves as a great introduction to the Outlands. It's quite open in design, dotted with three or four outposts for each faction as well as a few other small quest hubs. The zone is also home to three instances: Hellfire Citadel Ramparts, Blood Furnace and Shattered Halls. Both Ramparts and Furnace are accessible from level 60. They are surprisingly small instances, each capable of being completed within about 90 minutes with an average group (you can do probably clear them in half the time with a little practice). Each instance features three bosses and a good variety of trash pulls that require different tactics. The bosses, with one exception, are more interesting than the usual tank and

spank variety, requiring players to deal with multiple adds, special abilities, curses, kiting and the like. The item drops from these instances are roughly on par with Molten Core gear when it comes to item level. Hellfire Peninsula also features a new form of mission that will hopefully be returned to in other zones in the Outlands — bombing runs. Essentially an on rails shooter, players are given a few bombs with a short cool down and drop them to destroy set targets or a set number of enemies.

The second zone players will explore is the Zangarmarsh, an area akin to both Ungoro and Felwood. It's a large marsh (hence the name) filled with giant mushrooms and featuring some interesting creatures, including one new hunter pet, the Spore Bat. Spore Bats look like a cross between a manta ray and a jellyfish but are actually flying creatures. As it stands Spore Bats have no innate skills and we're unsure what skills they can train. Zangarmarsh quests are also more in line with the Ungoro and Felwood quests than they are with Hellfire Peninsula; whereas Hellfire is a warzone, the quests in Zangarmarsh are more geared towards exploration and collection for the Cenarian faction (new Cenarian faction

## Belfs and Spaceberries

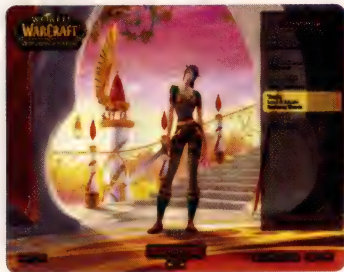
Derogatory names aside, both the Blood Elf and Draenei starting areas are beautifully designed and nicely compact; just big enough to engender some nice exploration but not so big that you spend more time running all over the place instead of questing (hello Barrens). The selection of starting quests for both races doesn't diverge much from the other races available in WoW Classic aside from one fantastic Draenei quest obtainable at level 8 that sees the player undergoing a lot of shape changing. Even if you have no plans to play a Draenei character you should level up to 8 just to give it a go. Unfortunately as it stands there is nothing in the Blood Elf Area that is nearly as good.



The racial leader of Shattrath City







— there is no crossover from Silithus) and cementing your foothold on the area for your respective faction.

### PIRATES VERSUS POSTMEN

Something with the expansion that should keep PvP players happy is the fact that every zone features some type of objective based world PvP that gives the victorious faction a zone wide 5% damage buff that lasts until the objectives are lost. Aside from the fun that can be had, world PvP objectives award players with tokens that can later be traded

in with faction vendors for decent gear rewards.

One of the most interesting and potentially most useful new tools that Blizzard have integrated into their UI is the Looking For Group button. Instead of having to post in a separate channel and hope that someone is watching and willing to pay attention, the process is nearly entirely automated now. Situated where the map button used to be (the map button is now situated on the side of the mini-map), the LFG button opens a window featuring a few drop down menus from which players can choose either Looking For Group or Looking for More. Both options have other menus from which players can choose the type of help they want — dungeon, raid, quest, zone, etc, and for what in particular — the name of the raid, dungeon, quest or zone. Once the choices are made, the system then tries to connect players with other players looking for



the more effective it will become. The other problem is something that Blizzard needs to look into before the expansion goes gold. As it stands the LFG system does not discriminate between classes when it comes to group composition so numerous times players have been placed into five man groups without a tank and healer. That said one of the groups I was put into was made up of three hunters (2 Beast Mastery spec, one Marksmanship), a shadow priest and a holy priest. Easiest instance run ever. ✨

DANIEL WILKS

[above] The looking for group tab is potentially very useful - if they can work in a class balance feature



World PvP objectives award players with tokens that can later be traded in with faction vendors for decent gear rewards



a similar thing. During prime time it only took the system a few minutes to put together groups for Hellfire Ramparts and Furnace.

There are only two problems with the LFG system as it stands; the first is that players still don't seem to be using the system on the whole, with many players spamming chat. As more players use the system



Fel Reavers are the new Devilsaurs



### 133t GEARS

As some of you may know there has been a rather significant change in stat allocations on gear. The new gear, which currently appears to only be dropped in Outland seems to start at around level 57-58 and contains roughly twice the amount of statistics you would expect to see on an item of that level. It's not at all uncommon to see a green trash drop with 20+ of one statistic and 30+ stamina. The major effect of this stat increase is that Outland PvP is no longer a matter of who can pull off their big attack macro first and 2-shot the other player. PvP battles with similarly Outlands geared players last a good deal longer and will hopefully evolve into a more skilful affair. Along with the standard "of the animal" gears available in WoW classic, Burning Crusade is introducing new item prefixes, including "of the bandit" which has agility, stamina and attack power, "of the grove", featuring strength, agility and stamina and "of the sorcerer" which features intelligence, spell critical and spell damage/healing.



# Command & Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars

SYSTEM: PC ■ CATEGORY: RTS ■ PLAYERS: 1-MULTI ■ DEVELOPER: EA LOS ANGELES ■ DUE: EARLY 2007

» If you're anything like me, you grew up on Command & Conquer. I remember the first time I played it: it was in primary school. Some teacher, recognising its educational value, had installed it on one of the computers. It introduced me to strategy gaming... and maybe made me long for a world where dealing with arseholes was as simple as putting some sandbags around their doorstep.

That was a decade ago. Now, though, there's a whole generation of kids who've never experienced the joy of sitting in front of the classroom Windows 95 box, furiously hammering the mouse button to make tiny virtual tanks run over tiny virtual soldiers while a group of their classmates watch in excitement and delight. It's kind of sad.

## HIT 'EM UP

Thankfully, this sorry state of affairs is about to come to an end. Command & Conquer 3 is in development. It's coming out just next year, in fact. And maybe, just maybe, it'll end up kicking all kinds of arse and let us forgive whomever it was that decided to keep this game on ice for so long. Or maybe it won't, if you want to be a bit more glass half-empty about things. The only thing to do at this stage is to find someone on the development team who's willing to talk and hit

them up for a bit of information.

As it happens, Mike Verdu — Executive Producer at EA Los Angeles — was more than happy to have a little chat with us.

"Command & Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars is set in the year 2047," he said when we quizzed him about the premise. "The world is a mess. Large parts of the planet have been ravaged by Tiberium infestation and the long struggle between the Global Defence Initiative and the Brotherhood of NOD. 30% of the earth is uninhabitable because of extreme Tiberium contamination. Another 50% of the planet is habitable, but in pretty bad shape."

He continued, "There is hope, however. As our story begins, the Brotherhood of NOD has been very quiet for the past few years and GDI has shifted its focus from war to reclaiming areas of the world that are infested with Tiberium. GDI plans to gradually eliminate Tiberium from the earth.

"These plans are disrupted by the unthinkable. Kane has been busy building up NOD while GDI has its attention focused elsewhere. The Brotherhood launches a massive surprise attack on GDI that begins with the destruction of [their] orbital

command centre, [taking out all of their military and political leaders in a single blow].

"The orange fireball in the night sky is the signal for the second phase of the attack. Large NOD armies flood into GDI strongholds, taking advantage

» "We're going to draw on the skills of the best C&C players in our community to make sure the game is finely tuned..." «

of the chaos created by the decapitation of the GDI command and control networks.

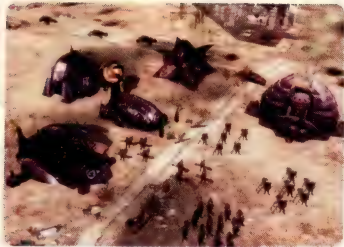
"Things are looking very grim for GDI. That's where you come in as a commander, rallying the demoralised and scattered GDI forces, mounting a counterattack against NOD and ultimately driving them out of your territory."

Switched on readers might've noticed that nowhere in his lengthy synopsis did he mention the new faction that's decided to join the long-running dust-up between NOD and GDI. When we asked him about them directly, all he said was that they're "very distinct" and that they have "some of the most innovative units [he's] ever had the pleasure on



This screenshot needs more Billy Dee Williams





working on in a RTS."

Mike was, however, quick to assure us that the team wouldn't be messing with the balance of the game. "The three sides were designed with balance in mind from the very beginning — we're acutely aware of how critical [it] is to the overall game. We're actually going to draw on the skills of the best Command & Conquer players in our community to make sure the game is finely tuned before we release it. We'll be bringing [them] into our building to join the team during the last stages of development. I believe our best players have a lot to teach us about how to balance a RTS given that their talent quite often exceeds that of the players we have on the team."

This in itself is reassuring. We know that EA can do strategy gaming — The Battle for Middle-Earth and Generals definitely proved that — but whether they can do real, honest-to-God, Brotherhood of NOD versus GDI Command & Conquer is another matter. The fact that they've turned to the fans suggests that maybe they can. It also shows a lot of respect for what truly is a classic series.

#### DON'T CALL IT A COMEBACK

Don't think for a moment that Command & Conquer 3 is going to be a simple remake, though. This is a game that's going to be all about a mix of new and old. "We have three generations of Command & Conquer fans on the team who love the original Tiberium games,

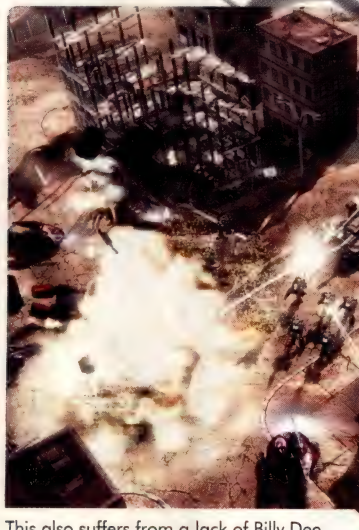


Lasergun /pewpew

so you'll find that [Tiberium Wars] is very true to the essence of the [originals]," Verdu explained. "That being said, we are innovating and updating, not just recreating [what we had] ten years ago. This will be a state of the art 2007 RTS game that takes advantage of everything we've learnt about the genre over the last several years — and pushes the envelope in a few areas.

"We're making considerable strides in improving AI. We want to have computer opponents that have defined styles of play so that players can complement their own strategies and play-styles. In addition to advancements in the AI, we're also working on a way to make the battles in Command & Conquer 3 just as exciting to watch as they are to play with new spectator

modes that make it possible to broadcast games to thousands of observers with running commentary."



This also suffers from a lack of Billy Dee



Continuing, he said, "The user interface and controls reflect this balance between classic Command & Conquer and innovative new design. Our in-game interface for Command & Conquer 3 is a sidebar that will feel familiar, but has capabilities that go far beyond [the old one]. We are combining the centralised production queues from the classic sidebar with contextual space for selected units and structures. The new user interface lets you quickly build units from different production structures, construct structures in multiple production queues, easily select and control grouped units, and activate upgrades and abilities anywhere on the map — even in the middle of a battle. But you can also interact with individual units and groups of units [at] a level beyond what you've become accustomed to in the latest generation RTS games."

Speaking of units, you can expect a lot of new toys to play with.

"We're bringing back a lot of the [old favourites] such as the Mammoth Tank, Orca and Stealth Tank," said Verdu,

"but we're also including several new and unique units for both GDI and NOD. The balance of 'new' to 'classic' is probably about 50:50 or 60:40." One of the new units is the Avatar, the NOD equivalent of the Mammoth Tank. It's "an intimidating war machine that stands 30 feet tall with a classic bipedal mech structure. By itself it's pretty damn cool, but it can do something special on the battlefield — pull the weapon systems off



of units and use them directly. For example, [it could] rip the flamethrowers off of a Flame Tank and add them to its own arsenal."

#### ZERG RUSH

Despite the introduction of a lot of new units, it seems as if NOD and GDI will be pretty much the same as they were in the previous games.

"GDI is like our conventional military 40 years in the future. The vehicles and structures are durable, but their tanks and other vehicles are slower than those of the other factions. GDI values human life and protects their infantry and tank crews with armour. Their weapons include rifles, grenades, machineguns, cannons, missiles and rail guns. A typical GDI tactic would be a frontal assault — hit your enemy hard with everything you've got.

"The Brotherhood of NOD is very different. Their vehicles are fast, experimental, unstable and unsafe — but they tend to have exotic technology that gives them interesting capabilities. They don't value life as highly, [but that's] not to say they waste their soldiers. NOD favours rockets, Tiberium, toxins, lasers and nuclear weapons. Typical NOD tactics include ambushes, stealth, hit and run attacks, and clever combinations of forces."

One of the things that we found really interesting — and great — is that they're bringing back the full-motion cutscenes from the original games. EA recently revealed the complete cast, including the likes of Billy Dee Williams and Michael Ironside. Plus, Joe Kucan — the man who has played Kane since basically forever — will be returning.

All in all, it's fair to say that Command & Conquer 3 is looking very promising indeed — as it should — and it will be interesting to see how it competes against both Supreme Commander and World in Conflict, which are also set for release next year.

**CHRISTOPHER TAYLOR**





# FURY

One of the real underdog fan favourites at this year's E3, Fury is shaping up to be an inventive new take on the MMO genre, combining fast action and in depth levelling/character creation mechanics. Although forgoing many of the trappings usually associated with an MMO such as an in game economy and trade skills, Fury managed to pique our attention with not only its good looks but also the prospect of being entirely PvP oriented. That's right, there's nary a PvE objective in sight. To get the low down on the game we went right to the source, Australian developer/distributor Auran and had a chat with the game's producer, **Paul Whipp**.

■ SYSTEM: **PC**  
 ■ CATEGORY: **MMO**  
 ■ PLAYERS: **LOTS**  
 ■ DEVELOPER: **AURAN**  
 ■ DUE: **TBA**



## Could you tell us a little about the world and story of Fury?

Fury is a fantasy game set in a dying universe that was once very similar to our own. You find yourself in an eerily familiar place where the Artisans tell you that you are one of the Chosen and that you have lived a thousand lives and are reborn again to help save the realm. You must go out into the remaining fragments of the world and fight Chosen from other realms to bring back Fury, the essence that the Artisans use to keep the realm from destruction.

## Where did the concept of Fury come from?

I have always loved role playing games but I find the grind of farming XP or gold in MMORPGs dull. I also love FPS games but get frustrated by the twitch elements, particularly when I play online.

I found myself increasingly drawn to

the idea of fast paced competitive role playing where I can have a completely customisable character that I can use in FPS style arena battles. The idea gelled into a game concept somewhere over the pacific when Tony Hilliam and I were flying to E3 in 2002.

## Fury will be a solely PvP game. Why did you decide to take this route over the more familiar PvE?

There are plenty of good PvE games. They are fun for a while but without the buzz and variety of other human opponents they can become dull even when they remain compelling. Done right, PvP provides more fun and longevity. We've built an effective mechanism to ensure even fights and incorporated sub goals for rewards and advancement so that that losing a match can be almost as much fun as winning.

## We understand that there are no set classes in the game – how will skills work in the game?

Skills, or abilities as we call them in Fury, are unlocked by accomplishing trials. A trial can be anything from keeping your group alive for several rounds to having to cap a certain number of crystals in a Vortex game.

Once an ability is unlocked you can buy it and equip it on your incarnation for use in battle.

There are a couple of

**FURIOUS!**





features that make things a lot more interesting as you gain more abilities:

Firstly, each ability and piece of equipment costs a certain number of equip points and your equip point total is determined by your current rank. This means you have to juggle the quality and amount of equipment and abilities you take into battle.

Secondly, all abilities have an elemental alignment, such as fire, water, nature or air. An ability may generate or consume elemental charges and its effectiveness may vary depending upon the number of charges associated with your avatar.

For example I might want to take a greater heal ability. It costs me a lot of equip points but will almost fully heal me or my group members. However, it consumes water charges. That means I need an ability to generate water charges. It also probably means I don't want to take fire abilities because they are less effective when I'm charged in water.

For the advanced player, setting up just the right combination of abilities can become an obsession.

#### What can you tell us about the combat system?

First of all it's fast. The majority of the abilities are instant cast and have a quick cooldown so the pace of the combat itself is kept pretty frantic. Since there is no mana to worry about you can be in the thick of the fight the whole time.

The general feel of combat will be familiar to players of MMORPGs except for the lack of mana. Players select targets and then click on the ability or use hotkeys to use their abilities on the target.

The penalty for dying depends on the game type and often just involves having to start back at your base with a small respawn delay if you die too frequently.

You will generally start fighting or supporting your allies by using abilities that charge you up in a particular element — perhaps Fire if you are a warrior focussed on fast damage, or water if you are focussed on healing and defence. This will improve your effectiveness with abilities aligned with those elements and make other abilities available that consume the charges.

Of course, other players can see your charge state and infer what you are up to. There are also abilities that can manipulate charges — moving them from one person to another or transforming them. It's very cool to nerf a water healer in the game by pushing unwanted fire charges onto him. However in the next game you might find he has brought in a fire consumption ability as insurance so rather than nerfing him you find he takes advantage of the charges



A rather impressive looking arena



Pyromania is its own reward

you've given him — almost killing you with a fiery death blow.

#### How does the levelling/loot system work in a PvP setting?

Levelling is handled through our trials system. You choose trials that you wish to undertake in order to unlock new abilities. When you achieve a certain number of trials your character will increase rank (level up). This allows you to use incarnations with more equip points so you can fight with more powerful equipment and abilities.

All of the trials are achieved in the normal PvP competitions. You don't have to go and kill orcs or wander across the world. You just have fun fighting and aim to accomplish your trials in the battles.

Loot is also won in the battles. When a character dies, the system may generate an item of loot based upon the type and rank of incarnation of the dead character. At the end of the fight players roll for the loot that their team has accumulated. This can be a sub game in its own right. If you have a purple Sword of Fire in the loot list you know everyone will be rolling on it. As you only get three rolls, it may make more sense for you to roll on something less popular in order to come away with more loot at the end.

#### Can you describe some of the combat environments?

Sure. The warzones are fragments of the destroyed realm. Their size and layout have quite a bit in common with the maps people fight in when playing games like Unreal Tournament. A favourite Vortex map we're playing in house at the moment is called Druje where two 16 person

teams fight over a ruined dam system with spectacular drops and waterfalls.

Another fun map is our colosseum map

where we have great bloodbath matches. Players loop around the perimeter areas looking for chances to dive in and fight over the choice power ups in the centre of the map.

#### What plans do you have to foster a community in game?

When you play Fury you join a particular Realm. Everyone you meet in your realm is a potential team mate. Your opponents are drawn from other realms.

When you return from a fight you will have earned some Fury. This essence can be contributed to your realm in order to give it specific bonuses against the other realms.

The first time you play the game you can go into a fight alone, with one or two friends or with a complete team of guild mates. The matchmaking system will find you appropriate allies from your realm to fill the team and evenly matched opponents from another realm. When you complete the battle you remain in

the same group so that you can fight again as many times as you wish.

Guilds are fully supported with their own leagues and ladders and with a comprehensive guild management system that supports guild officers.

#### How are you finding the Unreal 3.0 engine to work with?

The UE3.0 technology is excellent. The editor and tool support has allowed our artists to efficiently concentrate on building the content while our engineers have been freed up to focus on developing the game and low PC spec rendering systems.

#### Is there any added pressure due to the fact that Fury is the first truly Australian developed MMO?

Yes. Game development is a fast growing business in Australia, especially here in Brisbane. Nevertheless, we still rely upon the International community for a lot of our recruitment. It has taken us a long time to build up such an excellent team of developers and even longer to convince publishers in the West that we have what it takes to build an AAA world class title.

Showing Fury at E3 and more recently at PAX has overcome this and we're now set to make Fury the #1 competitive RPG in 2007.



Definitely a little bit of fury on show



# Bullet Witch

SYSTEM: **XBOX 360** ■ CATEGORY: **ACTION** ■ PLAYERS: **1**  
DEVELOPER: **CAVIA INC.** ■ DUE: **Q1 2007**

▶▶ I bet you're wondering what a Bullet Witch is. It's actually pretty straightforward: a Bullet Witch is a female magic user that packs heat in the form of a broomstick-shaped machine-gun. Note that a Bullet Witch should not be confused with the similarly-named-but-completely-different Ballot Witch. One is a mystical warrior tasked with ridding the earth of evil zombie hordes — the other is just really good at rigging elections. Is that all clear? Okay, well let's talk about this game then.

We went hands-on with the finished Japanese version of Bullet Witch. The best way to describe it is kind of like Devil May Cry but in large outdoor environments and with a hot chick instead of a hot guy. The aim of the game is to run around and shoot zombies with your broom-gun until the whole world is free of zombies. The twist is that the zombies are pretty smart and loaded up with



automatic weapons — so you need to make frequent use of your witch powers to stop them from killing you. At your disposal are

defensive powers like magic barriers to deflect attacks as well as more aggressive stuff like the ability to summon a flock of evil birds to peck your enemies to death. The latter is particularly awesome to watch — and kind of makes us wish we had our own flock of murder birds. To, you know, do our bidding and stuff.

So anyway, Bullet Witch is a decent enough game. It looks nice and the large environments are pleasant to run around in. We especially like how

objects such as bins and parked cars explode all over the place whenever you cast a big spell or get into a protracted gunfight. Combat seemed a bit stiff and formulaic at times, but we're assured that changes as you gain access to more powers later in the game. It's probably not going to be game of the year — but it'll at least be a few hours of solid shoot 'em up fun. Look out for the full review soon. ▶▶

## WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

Alternative costumes for the Bullet Witch. Because we genuinely are that sad.



That's a real room sweeper - geddit?

# Eragon

SYSTEM: **GCN, PC, PS2, XBOX, XBOX 360**  
CATEGORY: **ACTION** ■ PLAYERS: **1-2** ■  
DEVELOPER: **STORMFRONT STUDIOS** ■  
DUE: **RIGHT ABOUT NOW**

▶▶ Don't worry if you haven't heard of Eragon — you'll know all about it by the time film comes out this month. The quick and nasty is that it's kind of a Lord of the Rings for kids. The book the film is based on has already sold something like a gazillion copies in the U.S and will probably end up being just as lucrative here. So, yeah: that's Eragon. And now they're making a game out of it! Wheee!

That probably sounded really sarcastic, but it wasn't meant to be. The fact is that the game version of Eragon actually looks okay. It's a co-op hack 'n' slasher with a fixed camera that plays a lot like Stormfront's last big movie-license game: LoTR: The Two Towers. Playing the titular hero, you (and maybe a friend) run around set-piece environments hacking up bad guys, solving puzzles and occasionally using Eragon's Force-like magic powers. Oh, and there's some sort of dragon-flying mini-game in there as well, but we didn't



[up] A boy and his flying lizard

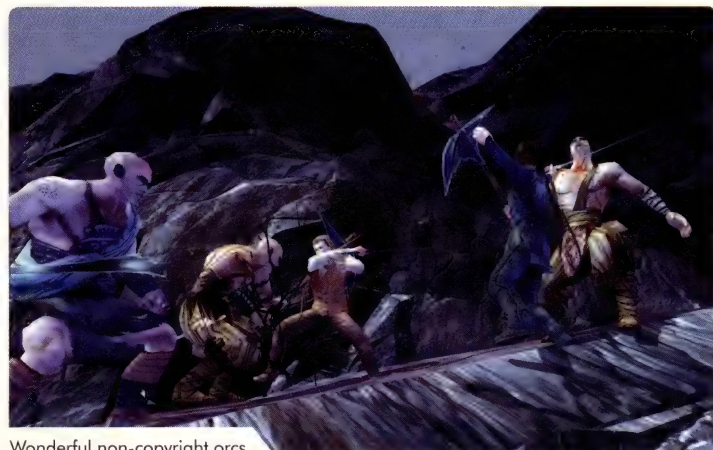
get to see it because we were crap and kept dying on the first level.

Incidentally, we should mention that the cutscenes in this game are really impressive. Stormfront have refrained from nicking footage straight from the film and instead opted to create their own stylised interpretations of key events in the story. It's kind of hard to describe what they've come up with — they're sort of like the cutscenes in Thief. But more animated. Anyway, the point is they're worth checking out.

It's clear that Eragon isn't going to be the best game you've ever played, but it will certainly entertain fans of the movie as well as people fond of simple co-op action games. Which is fine because — really — it doesn't need to be anything more than that. Does it? ▶▶

## WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

An improvement on the graphics in the Xbox 360 version. While they're not awful or anything, they're certainly not as good as they could be.



Wonderful non-copyright orcs



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# A New

» ALEXANDER GAMBOTTO-BURKE

**R**emember that scene from *Raiders of the Lost Ark*? The one in Cairo? You know, when Indy's butt-slapping every stereotypical Egyptian who blinks in his direction? And then, when that big, turbanned guy shows up with two swords, he just pulls out a gun and shoots him? Man, that was great. Don't you wish you could just do that to LeChuck halfway through *Monkey Island*? Or maybe, when Purple Tentacle's about to drink Dr. Fred's toxic sludge, you just whip out your six-shooter and plug him in the chops? It sure would save a lot of trouble. In your common-or-garden adventure game, though, it's just not on; instead, you've got to go on an epic journey through space and time — or, in the case of those *Magic Schoolbus* games, someone's colon — and wrap your grey matter around the kinds of puzzles that would drive even *Deep Blue* insane. But there was something charming about them, wasn't there? After all, more than any other dying genre, players really can't let adventure games go.

## RISK TAKERS

Ragnar Tørnquist, the Funcom designer behind *The Longest Journey* and *Dreamfall*, thinks he knows why. "Strong story and strong characters," he explains.

"I think that's completely universal. I don't think there's anybody out there who doesn't enjoy a good story. It crosses all borders, sexes, and ages. I think mature themes, mature characters, and strong storylines can be made to work in any genre, but adventure developers seem to have been more willing to take those risks. So, people who play adventure games expect a little more from the story and the characters. Also, with adventures, you have the chance to develop these characters; you have room for more dialogue, more character development; you have the ability to include seams that can run through the game, which is much harder to do in a game that's action-oriented."





# Adventure



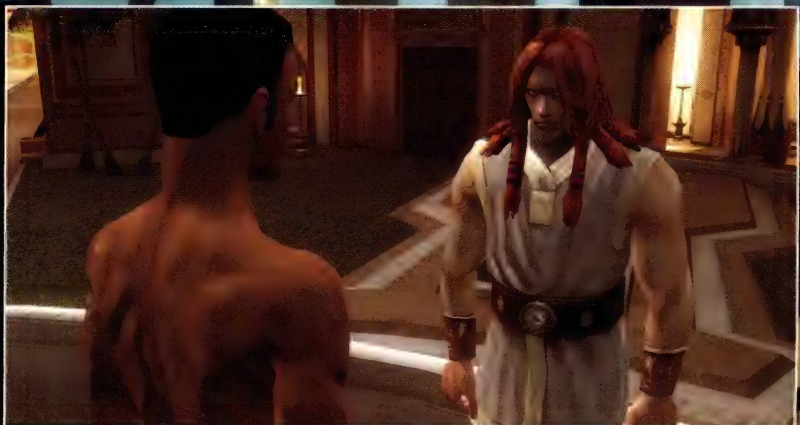
Tim Schafer, the crazy boy you know and love from *Day of the Tentacle*, *Full Throttle*, *Grim Fandango*, and *Psychonauts*, tows a similar line. "To some people, I think 'adventure game' means a very specific set of interfaces and gameplay experiences," he acknowledges, "but to me, the important part is that you're going on an adventure, rather than playing a game. Whereas a game is a set of rules designed for competition between you and another person, or perhaps a computer, adventure games are more about having an experience in an environment with characters and objects. You're transported to another world; it's really more about the experience, and, possibly, the struggle. And many different types of gameplay can take place in the world, but those are really just mechanisms for giving you a reason to spend time there."

Unlike Tørnquist, though, Schafer's keen to make a distinction between the actual plotline and the world in which it takes place, which he feels is the core of the adventure game experience. "You know in the liner notes for *Stop Making Sense*, the *Talking Heads* album?" he asks. "There's a quote from David Byrne that says lyrics are just a trick to get people to listen to music for longer. And it's not that I feel gameplay or story are tricks to get people to listen to one or the other for longer, but both gameplay and story are just devices to get people to stay in your world. You make this environment for people to hang out in and have fun, and gameplay and story provide motivation for being there, and help you forget you're in an artificial space. So story's a tool for motivating a player; they don't complete a level because they want to get 100 points; they complete it because they care about their character."

## IS LINEARITY REALLY THE DEVIL?

Problem is, though, demands are changing. Whilst everyone will always enjoy a good yarn, the nature of story as we know it is being compromised by the pursuit of dynamic gameplay experiences and non-linearity. To paraphrase Boggles, *GTA* killed the SCUMM star. "Linearity is a criticism that's sometimes valid with adventure games," Tørnquist admits. "People have thought that *Dreamfall*, at times, could have been a bit too linear; you sort of push along to the next cutscene. A lot of it has to do with the expectations of the genre, though. Sometimes, that's what people are expecting - a bit of story, a bit of gameplay, a bit of story, and so on. And I'm not sure whether it's always a bad thing, because what drives people to good adventure games is the story, and to really tell a good story, you need a certain degree of linearity, and you need to have cutscenes, and you need to have things that the player doesn't necessarily have any control over. So, I think it's a valid criticism, but at the same time, it's just that the conventions of the genre and the way these things work necessitates a certain degree of film-like storytelling."

"That said, I don't think it's impossible to have an *Oblivion*-sized world in an adventure game. Having a strong story is just giving people direction, and letting them know what to do next. As long as that's there, I think it's fantastic to have this RPG-esque world you can roam in. I think that will just benefit the game. Again, only if the story is right for it. You have to make sure you keep that in mind from the get-go. I think, also, blending that *Oblivion*-sized world with the story and characters of an adventure game would be fantastic. I would love to do that; have this huge world with adventure gameplay."







Oblivion's definitely not the first name listed in Schafer's Little Black Book — it takes him over a minute of careful consideration before he finally says, "It wasn't... to my tastes" — but he's definitely excited over the prospect of more expansive adventures. He just happens to share Tørnquist's concern that non-linearity may not serve every story. "For example," he argues, "the reason we had action elements in Full Throttle was not because it was time to have action elements in an adventure game; after all, we didn't have any in Grim Fandango. It was just that the main character was a biker; you were not living up to the whole 'biker' genre unless you have the violence and conflict in it, with guys whipping motorcycle chains over their heads. So, you had to have some action in there. So, I think, for whatever world you're trying to make, there's a perfect mechanic that makes that world come alive. But it's still an adventure game, because you're dealing with characters, puzzles, and so on."

Tørnquist agrees. "If you have a story like Dreamfall, where time is of the essence, and where you're trying to get to the next point to save somebody, it doesn't quite make sense to have these separate quests. Games will benefit from big worlds and side-quests as long as it's done right and doesn't come at the expense of the main storyline. We talked about it in Dreamfall, but we eliminated it because it didn't seem right."

#### CUTTING THE RED WIRE

If you're an adventure game designer in Tørnquist's position — which, let's face it, you're not — you've only got one solution: make that linear, restrictive storyline the best damn linear, restrictive storyline money, good looks, sex appeal, and an oil-baron sugardaddy can buy. And part of that involves making sure that when your main character's got his tentacles tied over defusing a bomb, your player isn't taking a break to peruse his hardcore... er... 'anime' collection. So what's there to do? Provide the player with enough interactivity to keep him feeling involved. Schafer gets this.

"You have to align the player's motivations with the character's motivations," he says. "You don't want them being told they have to save this person they don't actually want to save. You've got to make them want to care about that person. It's easy to think of a scene — 'Oh, it's a scene where a character finds this out, and where a character finds this out,' but the trick is how you turn the information from a cutscene into information that can come out during gameplay. And there's something to the advice you get from writing books, where they talk about how to handle exposition — 'show me, don't tell me.' It's better to expose facts through action; you can also show dialogue, but that's







not quite as strong. So, the more you can tell the story through action, the better film it makes; the more you express the story through gameplay, the better game it makes."

It also helps to minimize the amount of cutscenes, according to Tørnquist. "I think that certain games, like Half-Life, can work extremely well without cutscenes. It really depends on the game, I suppose; some games are improved by the use of cutscenes. For example, I really like the cutscenes in the GTA games, where you have these sequences that prepare you for a quest, and it doesn't remove you from the interactivity in any way. At the same time, Half-Life's great, where you're put inside the head of this character, and other characters are walking around you, acting out these little plays. And you can still walk around and do whatever you want. I don't think cutscenes will ever vanish, but I think people will find new ways of making them function. In Dreamfall, when Zöe is inside her ex-boyfriend's apartment, and these soldiers are coming up, you have a choice of what to do — are you going to try to run out of there, are you going to try to hide? It plays out a little bit differently depending on what you do. We call that a set-piece. I don't think we did enough of it, but that's something I'd like to explore — having these scripted scenes that are, in fact, cutscenes, but that don't take away control of the character, and have consequences depending on your actions."

There's a lot of talk going on 'round here about forwarding — if not completely revolutionising — the adventure genre, but Schafer's not ready to let the past go just yet. As the braniac behind such adventure puzzle classics as Grim Fandango's flaming beaver fiasco, he's a little reluctant to completely dismiss some of the genre's clichés. Like, say, the whole "combine anchovies with fax machine to produce makeshift iron lung" thing. "Almost everything I learned from graphic adventures went into Psychonauts," he says, "except for the real brain-twister puzzles. With a graphic adventure, you kind of have this formula for designing puzzles — you have this obstacle, and this goal, and then you try to anticipate what would be a logical solution to that, and then you make that case fail, and give a little hint that's somewhat confusing. So, the player can try different things, and they keep failing, but they keep getting little hints. If they're not patient, they might get super-frustrated, which

is why only certain people like adventure games. And they keep trying, and trying, and then all the clues fall into place, and there's this huge 'AHA!' moment; that's what adventure gamers liked; that's what people who weren't into adventure games really hate.

"When we started working at Microsoft, Ed Fries — the head of Microsoft Games Studios — said something: 'You can make your game for winners or losers, but you should make it for losers, because there are just so many more of them out there.' Which is just his way of saying, 'Don't make it too hard.' So, I think those really hard puzzles that were the mark of old adventure games were the one thing that didn't survive. But those were really fun to design because they went against the whole notion of usability testing. We did have some of those puzzles in the early days of Psychonauts, and we got results back from Microsoft usability testing reporting no one got those things. And we were like, 'Well, yeah, it's a puzzle. They're not supposed to get it.' And they were like, 'Well, they didn't get it, so it fails usability. So take them out.' So we took them out. I would like to see more of those puzzles, provided they're well-designed. You can take them too far, though. You know, when it's, 'Just tell your narrative in your narrative parts, and then your puzzles are just Rubik's Cubes.' When FMV games first came out, you'd be walking down a hallway, and it was super-spooky, and then you'd see a door, and woah, it's got a bunch of tiles on it you've got to slide around. I think that's the worst case of that, where the puzzles were totally separate from the story. People did love that Myst, though."

It's here that Tørnquist reaches an impasse: he thinks adventure puzzles as we know them need to find a place in between the Power Glove and FMV on the bus to Oldtown. "Adventure game developers need to start including gameplay that isn't very strictly puzzle-based," he remarks. "A lot of people had a lot of difficulty with adventure games in the past, because they've been very abstract; you have to combine the chewing gum with the wrench to get something, and it didn't make sense to people. So, I think by making the games more intuitive by including gameplay that isn't completely traditional, you can win people over. It also helps to have high production values; these days, that's very important."

#### MOVING ON

Whether you're a puzzle-muncher or a Tørnquist acolyte, there's no doubt that one thing's very clear: the adventure genre needs to yank up its long-johns and get with the times. Whether that means introducing more action-oriented gameplay like in Dreamfall and Psychonauts, or just refining puzzles so they're more accessible to the average Big Brother watcher, something needs to be done to bring story and character into the largely soulless world of videogames. Is it time to allow players to pistol-whip LeChuck? Keep them eyes open. <<

## Who did what now?

Maybe you're young. Maybe you just didn't dig adventure games. Gosh, maybe you're on drugs and think you're actually reading Tatler. I really don't know, but there's always the possibility that you haven't actually heard of our two shiny interviewees, Schafer and Tørnquist. With that in mind, they've been kind enough to provide the kind of information you could easily get by looking them up on Mobygames, you lazy bastard.



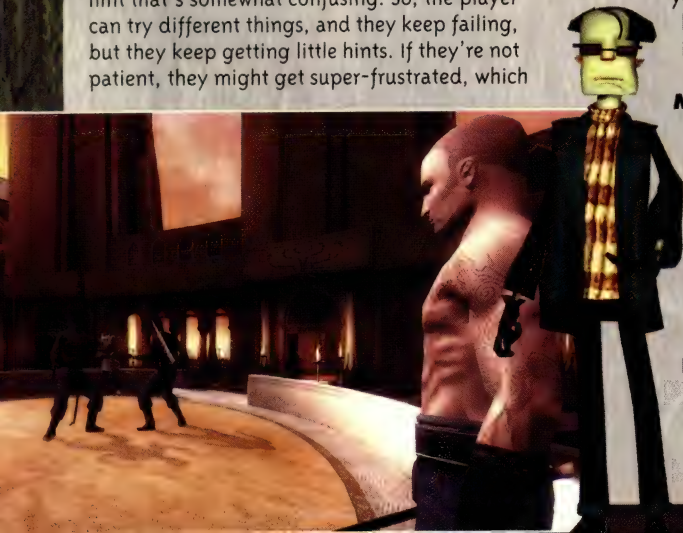
**Ragnar Tørnquist:** "Okay, I started working at Funcom actually twelve years ago, so I've spent most of my professional career here.

Before that, I got a degree in writing for film and television at New York University, and that's pretty much it. In terms of games I've worked on, I started as a producer, designer, writer — pretty much everything — on a game for the PlayStation and Sega Saturn, Casper. And after that, I worked on a number of games, including, of course, The Longest Journey, Anarchy Online — as a story-writer — and, then, of course, Dreamfall."



**Tim Schafer:** "Well, I started working in games right out of college, at LucasArts. They needed people who could write

dialogue and also program. So, I started there in 1989, and worked on Ron Gilbert's Secret of Monkey Island, then the sequel, Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge, and then one of the other writers on that, Dave Grossman, and I, co-designed Day of the Tentacle, which was the sequel to Maniac Mansion. After that, there was the first game I designed by myself: Full Throttle, a 'Heavy Metal adventure game', as it said on the box. And then, after that, we did our first 3D graphic adventure, Grim Fandango, and a little while after that game was finished, I left and started my own company, DoubleFine Productions. We shipped our first game, Psychonauts, last year [2005]. And now we're working on a new, top-secret, unannounced project."







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present is yesterday, man.

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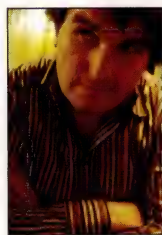


# Reviews

## Game Theory

SEAMUS BYRNE

### Episode Two: Rise of the Episodes



If Episode One in the true life of episodic content was the recent Half-Life 2 sequel, then Episode Two may be the recent announcement that GTA IV will have episodic content releases over Xbox Live. In other words, if you want to play everything GTA

IV will have to offer, you must play it on Xbox 360. That's quite the coup for Microsoft, and if the sales figures on a multi-platform AAA release skew toward the 360 because of this factor, it could be a major turning point in game development.

Episodic content brings together a solution to two of the biggest crises facing the industry. One, we give the time-poor gamers and so-called 'lapsed' gamers a way to come back thanks to far shorter time commitments on good game content. Two, lower individual unit prices should make us gamers happier while ultimately getting us to spend more for what is internally the same, or slightly more, development effort. Here's a telling quote from Valve's own news blog.

"After spending six years creating Half-Life 2, we decided to build HL2's successor as a trilogy of episodes," said Gabe Newell, Valve's president and co-founder. "This has allowed us to take greater risks in gameplay, move the technology forward faster, and let people know what happened when the Citadel blew up in 18 months, rather than asking them to wait 6 years."

There is no mistaking this is a perfect fit for Valve and their Steam distribution system. After an initial big download of a first episode and game engine, later episodes can be much lighter on the bandwidth as they are more simply an update and content pack. Good for places like Australia

where stupid bandwidth limitations can be costly for gamers. And for a development house, there is potentially more use from the expensive game engine and assets and so a greater return on investment — if each episode is good enough to draw players back for more.

In the long term, another benefit of episodic content could be new creative opportunities. Good television writers have learned to use the ad break as a means to building tension, or grant a moment's respite, or let a good joke sink in. Game developers too could use this structure to enhance storytelling with this pregnant pause.

The trick isn't to just leave people hanging, but to really grasp the time expected between the end of one part to the intro of the next. You can't just flat out annoy your fans, nor can you go for a weak sauce 'to be continued' beca

Playing with traditional game structure is also on the cards. Imagine having what you think is a major boss battle, only to discover the 'real' boss is just behind the next door — STAY TUNED. Done well, you could be eagerly anticipating a major battle the instant you start the next episode — no foreplay to worry about before getting to home base (not that I don't like foreplay!)

Episodes could also lead to seasons. Micropay for each episode, built to give an hour or two of gripping gameplay. If it's good enough, people come back every week for 22 episodes (just to work with a typical US TV series count) and the developer has made a lot more per 'total' game than they would at retail.

We get access to more good gameplay, sooner, with less filler, in easier to swallow doses; they have the potential to get more money out of us, a better use of their resources, and new creative opportunities. I'm yet to spot a downside.

THE HYPER SCORING SYSTEM - What's it all about?

0-49

It doesn't take a Wilks to realise these game really suck. A lot.

50-59

These games could have been something... but they aren't.

60-69

Flying the flag of Averagetown and Mediocrity. Avoid visiting!

70-79

On the cusp of buyability. Well worth a cheeky glance or two.

80-89

The titles sport chunky seams of gameplay gold. Play my pretties!

90+

Rip-roaring good times await in the busomy embrace of these games...







Sam shucks gangster convention and holds his gun correctly



The only way to liven up a cruise



Extreme synchronised swimming

# TOM CLANCY'S Splinter Cell: Double Agent

DYLAN BURNS tries to avoid Stockholm Syndrome...

Splinter Cell will always be Splinter Cell. And it's nice to know that despite all the next-gen expectations heaped upon the beleaguered shoulders of Ubisoft Shanghai, the elements that define the series have been kept firmly in place. Whether you see that as a good or bad thing is subjective.

## MOLEY MOLEY MOLEY!

This time Sam's gone mole. With nothing left to lose after his own flesh and blood is cruelly ripped from this earth, he chooses the most dangerous undercover assignment possible: infiltrate John Brown's Army (JBA), a domestic terrorist cell hell bent on shaking things up no matter the cost in human lives.

Of course, in order to infiltrate a terrorist organisation, you need to act like a terrorist. Welcome to the integration of branching morality. Every mission in Double Agent features multiple and often conflicting objectives. For example,

you may be asked by JBA to plant a bomb, but the NSA will not like the thought of innocent lives being lost. They'll ask you to scan said bomb so that you have the code to disarm it at a pivotal moment. Your trust level with both organisations updates in real time in reaction to your actions and most of the fun comes from trying to balance malicious deeds with benevolent ones. If either bar reaches zero, it's game over. It is possible at times to please everybody, but there will always be fallout for every decision, which pretty much means somebody dies — whether that's one person or thousands is completely up to you.

Morality has always been somewhat shaky in games; after all, how can we care for digital representations? However Double Agent certainly has some hard-hitting ramifications that occur in reaction to your decisions. I'm a pretty hardened gamer but there was actually a moment when I

thought 'Nah, they won't do that...' and then BAM! they did it, and I actually felt a little guilty for being such a mean bastard. The beauty of the game is that often your NSA bosses will encourage you to perform nasty deeds in order to get deeper undercover, but your own scruples may scream otherwise, so you'll go those extra miles to avoid unnecessary bloodshed.

Tension is also highlighted by the handful of Directed Moments offered to players. These are pivotal moments in the story where you're forced into making a decision or action quick smart. Situations include deciding whether to execute an innocent captive, trying furiously to correct a foiled parachute drop and choosing whether to stymie a massive bomb blast on a passenger cruiser. Each one is tense, fast and incredibly intuitive and it would have been awesome to see a few more scattered throughout the game. To give you an idea of the



[up] Sam fails his Hide in Shadows roll

effort gone into this branching, there are multiple endings to the game and major characters can and do die depending on what you do.

## DEEP GUACAMOLE!

The stringent alert system of previous Splinter Cell games is now well and truly gone. I guess you could say that it's been somewhat dumbed down but now it really is the player's choice whether to approach situations as a silent snake or gung-ho aggressor. As long as you keep an eye on your trust levels, each mission is an open book. Gone too is Sam's light meter. Instead there are three levels of exposure: green (smooth sailing), yellow (you're exposed,



Sam's one tough cookie – he no longer needs health packs to heal wounds. Double Agent goes in the direction of realism, with a shaking camera, thumping heart beat and greying screen indicative of his health. He recovers gradually by staying hidden.



Sam finds it hard to criticise others for their choice of headwear

**>>> Your NSA bosses will encourage you to perform nasty deeds, but your own scruples may scream otherwise <<<**

buddy) and red (in deep poo). These are indicated by little lights on Sam's clothes and equipment.

Luckily, Sam has a veritable treasure trove of guns and gadgets to help him out. In Double Agent, mission objectives are varied, so you may not always get to complete them all. But it's probably worth trying to go for the ones marked with a star, as these unlock extra gadgets and weapons. This is an interesting mechanic, as it means that the better you play, completing most or all of the objectives, the more the game lets you experiment by rewarding you with extras, such as force-hacking, automatic lock picking and cool weapon extensions.

Also new is the idea of a central JBA headquarters which you return to multiple times between missions. You're given little mini-games to complete as well as some covert NSA objectives, all of which are given a time limit (half an hour or so). The coolest aspect of the HQ is that it progressively opens up as you sneak around. Get spotted in a restricted area and your terrorist buddies won't like it. It feels awesome sneaking around, scanning for fingerprints, recording conversations to bypass voice locks, and rummaging for background information. One moment saw me caught by a female character, but rather than panic the suave Mr. Fisher pulled some smooth

moves and ended up covering his presence with some lurv action!

Speaking of lurv action, this is one pretty game (we reviewed it on 360, natch). Not only that, but just like that hot girl in a club who surprises you by actually saying something interesting and intelligent, there's also a depth to the game that needs to be experienced to appreciate. The level design is incredibly varied and realistic and you'll often find yourself just taking time to admire the textures and lighting effects. Each level is packed full of details to immerse the player and, given the trial-and-error slant of the game, your best friend is the forgiving save function (you can save anywhere). Repeat attempts at levels may be needed to get that smooth flow going.

With breathtaking graphics and level design, an innovative trust and morality system, and that pure X-factor that just screams quality, Splinter Cell: Double Agent fulfills both your desire to save the world and that urge to unleash your dark side a little. <<

#### AVAILABLE ON:

360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / Xbox / GCN

#### DETAILS:

**CATEGORY:** Action/Stealth

**PLAYERS:** 1-6

**DEVELOPER:** Ubisoft Shanghai

**PUBLISHER:** Ubisoft

**PRICE:** \$119.95 (Xbox 360), \$89.95 (PC), also coming to GCN, PS2, Xbox

**RATING:** MA 15+ • **AVAILABLE:** Now

#### HYPER VERDICT:

**PLUS:** Looks great, moral ramifications, branching objectives, Directed Moments.

**MINUS:** Same old trial-and-error gameplay, it's over too quickly.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
92	90	92
OVERALL		
92		
Even bald, Sam is the coolest unseen mofo ever.		



**RAPSCALLION SPIES** Multiplayer is a fast-paced game of cat-and-mouse, which involves Spies, who are acrobatic and equipped with gadgets to destroy lights and download files, and Upsilon Forces, tough mercs on a mission to squash any Spy cockroaches they come across. It's heart-stopping stuff and should keep you occupied with individual, team and co-op challenges.





Early next year we'll be able to see how id Software and Splash Damage's *Enemy Territory: Quake Wars* stacks up against *BF2142*...

Impractical weapons of war part 1



2 legs bad, 4 legs good - a lesson in barnyard fascism and robotics

# Battlefield 2142

**KOSTA ANDREADIS** meets a complete dreamboat

When it comes to shooting of the online variety, people usually sit in one of two camps, Camp Counter Strike or Camp Kookamung-err, *Battlefield*. Sure other titles in the genre exist, but really who cares - UT nerds be-gone! Don't get me wrong, there's nothing wrong with a little variety, but when that variety exists in one neat little package like it does with *Battlefield*, there's little need to look elsewhere. As such, *Battlefield* is one of the premier online shooters for good reason - no other title out there juggles as many play styles as effortlessly as *Battlefield* does. Its sandbox style gameplay is both dreamy and to die for! Ahem, *Battlefield 2142* feels like a logical step for the series, one that utilises its new futuristic setting to bring many additions and refinements to the table in addition to the new arsenal of weapons and vehicles on display. Dreamy!

## MECHS AND HOVER TANKS

Instead of the war torn past (and present) of previous titles, *Battlefield 2142* sees players fight it out in the harsh global environment that could only be - the future (as said by movie-voice guy). It seems that something called 'global warming', which although sounding delicious, has subsequently thrown the world into a second Ice Age. And no, not a cute Ice Age like the one featuring the voice talent of one Ray "Everybody Loves Me" Romano, but a real one that sees people fighting for both survival and the precious few resources left. But on the plus side, mankind has finally got around to developing mechs which, naturally, add more than a little street cred to any ongoing global conflict. So, by now Hyper readers should be well versed in the goings on of a round in *Battlefield*, where two teams vie for strategic flags on a map in order to run their opponent's ticket counter down

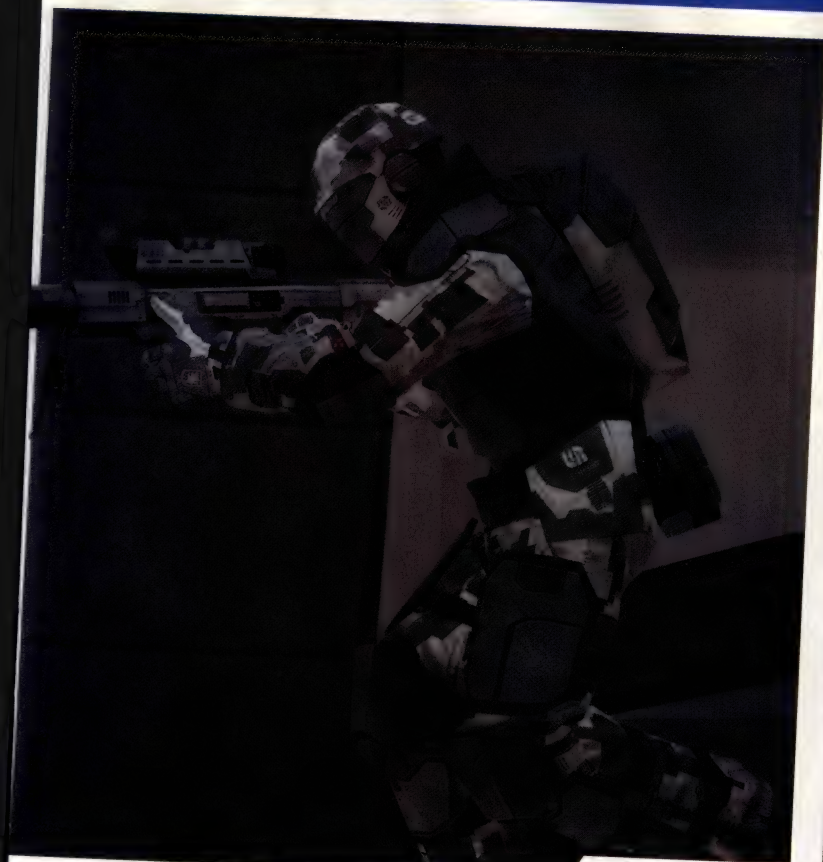
to zero. If that didn't make sense you shouldn't be reading or, gulp, I shouldn't be writing. Simply known as Conquest, it's the meat and potatoes of *Battlefield* and enjoys a welcome return in *2142* but right alongside it comes an all new play mode simply called, Titan.

Named after large hulking warships that reside in the sky, Titan Mode doesn't stray too far from the concepts laid down in Conquest mode as this time around two teams vie for strategic missile silos, as opposed to flags, with the overall goal being to destroy the other army's Titan class warship. But Titan mode is much more than Conquest sans flags, as players not only have to capture and defend silos but also infiltrate and defend Titan ships too, paving the way for a myriad of things to do - here's but a few. Squads can hop from silo to silo in an aircraft carrier, capturing and securing missile strikes as they see fit. Commanders



can navigate their team's Titan ship to strategic locations on a map as people man gun stations within, firing downward on enemy troops. Lone wolves can take up posts next to silos, defending them from incoming enemy craft and soldiers. Squads can board the enemy Titan (when its shields are down), then make their way to its core to try and take the ship down from within. Or they could simply continue to capture and secure missile strikes that would now damage the newly exposed hull. Or if it's your team's Titan shield that has been brought down, you'll need to decide whether to remain on the offensive or to switch and try and defend.





PHALLIC SYMBOLISM!



## Titan battles can change in an instant, paving the way for an experience that is both new and refreshing

The list goes on and on and it's in Titan mode where the squad based system implemented in Battlefield 2 is utilised to its full extent, with the outcome depending wholly on how each squad works together, consequently making the role of commander quite large shoes to fill. With many factors in play, Titan battles can change in an instant, paving the way for an experience that is both new and refreshing. A great addition to the Battlefield fold, and with servers alternating between Conquest and Titan maps, you'll no doubt find Battlefield sessions lasting a lot longer than usual.

As you alternate between the sprawling urban firefights of Conquest maps and the epic air to ground intensity of the Titan maps you'll no doubt find time to use each of the game's four soldier kits — Recon, Assault, Engineer, and Support. Thankfully nothing is missing, and players looking to bring one of their squad members

back from the brink with a shot of voltage to the chest will find Medic abilities part of the Assault kit. With the other specific kits missing from the line-up being absorbed by the four on offer, the lower number helps bring balance and variation to the forefront, with a far clearer distinction. That said, players will find many abilities unavailable to them from the outset as 2142 also advances the promotion and reward system, with numerous unlockable kit-specific items and weapons on offer representing the best implementation of this system the series has seen. No doubt players will need to spend countless hours to receive each item, promotion, medal, ribbon and badge that the game has to offer.

**2142 REASONS TO LOVE ME**  
Although utilising the same engine as its previous outing, Battlefield 2142 is a stand alone product as opposed to an expansion for good

reason, it's arguably the best entry the series has seen thus far. A big call to be sure but from the outstanding maps that reinforce the squad system better than ever before, to the refreshing and compelling new Titan mode, and the more balanced and varied kits on offer, the series sees its most realised entry yet with 2142. Which brings us back to the mechs (segue way!). Yes, usually reserved for quirky Japanese action titles, being able to hop into a mech, namely in a Battlefield game — is reason enough to buy this game. That is of course until someone disables your mech with a well placed EMP (electro-magnetic pulse) grenade and another squad member places charges on its legs and then blows you both up. Going from a steel God to a mere mortal in an instant is humiliating, and sure you could get out of the mech before it gets blown to pieces but like they say, a good captain is willing to go down with his ship. Even if it has two legs, fires missiles and makes that cool mech-sound when it walks. <<



Perspective or miniature aircraft?



A fine example of Mech Envy

### AVAILABLE ON:

360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / Xbox / GCM

### DETAILS:

**CATEGORY:** Online FPS

**PLAYERS:** 1-Multi

**DEVELOPER:** DICE

**PUBLISHER:** EA

**PRICE:** \$99.95

**RATING:** M

**AVAILABLE:** Now

### HYPER VERDICT:

**PLUS:** Titan Mode, refined reward and promotion system, well designed maps.

**MINUS:** Lag issues when boarding Titans, knife kills still as cheap as ever.

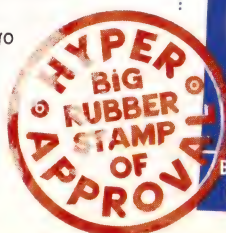
**VISUALS** **SOUND** **GAMEPLAY**

**89** **90** **93**

**OVERALL**

**20**

Battlefield and the future go together like... two things that go together!

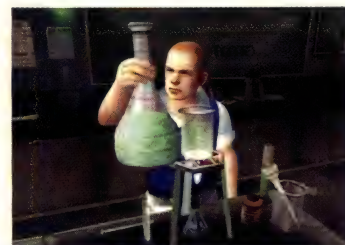
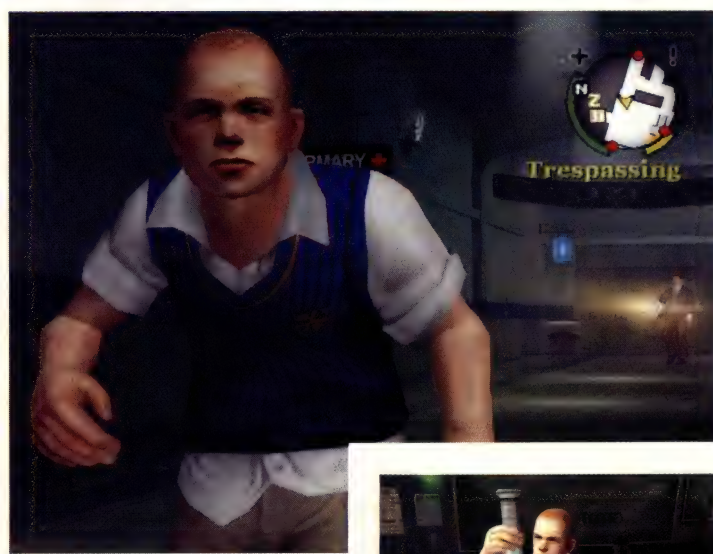
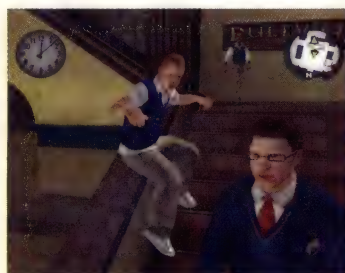
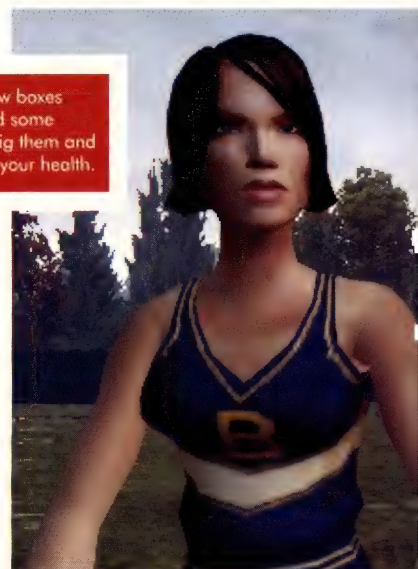






Don't show this screen on the Gold Coast

Always carry a few boxes of chocolates and some flowers. Chicks dig them and getting a kiss increases your health.



# Canis Canem Edit

**DANIEL WILKS** keeps the controversy coming

There are few, if any people left in the civilised world that have not heard of Canis Canem Edit (the game formerly known by the much catchier title of Bully) in some way. Over the last six or so months everyone who has anything to gain from a little controversy has pointed fingers at Bully for being a "Columbine simulator", exhorting children to beat up weaker children, demonising education, praising anti-social behavior and what have you. Rockstar for their part have remained mum on the subject until just before release of the game, claiming that they have nothing to prove but obviously relishing the huge amount of press the game has been getting in the mainstream media. So the big question remains: is Canis Canem Edit the game that will trigger the fall of Western civilisation? Will it cause umpteen teenagers to run out and shoot up their schools in "emulation" of the events in the game? Will it make

you hate authority figures more than you already do? The answer to all these questions is a resounding no. Canis Canem Edit is a rather innocent game. There's no blood, no death and no crime aside from a few petty pranks and a little defacing of public property. So was all the pre-release hype from the media (both gaming oriented and mainstream) justified? Not really.

## NOBLE IGNOBILITY

Players take the role of young Jimmy Hopkins, a rather homely, brutish and unlikable boarding school veteran, dumped on the doorsteps of Bullworth Academy while his mother goes on a year long honeymoon cruise with her latest husband. As soon as he arrives, Jimmy is the brunt of many jokes — he's picked on for his seeming lack of intelligence, for his ratty clothes and for simply being the new guy. Initially taken under the wing of the unstable yet charismatic bad-boy Gary, who unsurprisingly

goes on to be the villain of the piece, Jimmy sets out to do the only thing he can to stop being picked on — progressively take over every clique (jocks, greasers, nerds, preppies) in the school and end bullying once and for all. It's a noble cause achieved in the most ignoble of ways; schoolyard beatings, petty crime, blackmail and more than a little teasing over a number of GTA styled missions. More on that later. First we have to go to class.

Being set in a school, during the school term, Canis Canem Edit has a very tight time structure which works both for and against the gameplay. In a normal school day, Jimmy has two classes to attend, one morning and one afternoon. Be late for class and you'll have prefects after you. Get caught and you'll either be thrown into class or, if you've been truant enough, get thrown into a dull punishment mini-game. It's a clever little conceit making the classes seem far more

necessary than they are in the grand scheme of things. Each class, Gym, Science, Autoshop, English, Art and Photography presents the player with a mini-game to complete to pass that level. Each level passed grants the player a skill bonus; complete a level of English and Jimmy will have access to more taunts or be given the ability to apologise, complete a Shop class and unlock a new bike to ride.

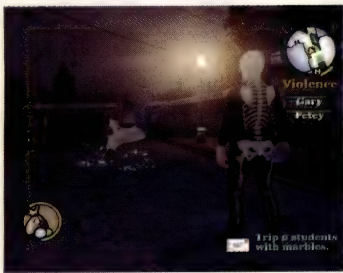
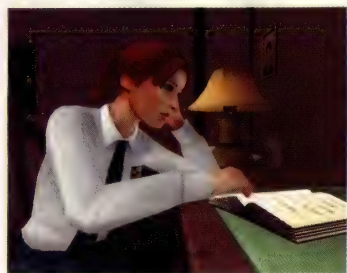
Unfortunately the accelerated time scale the game uses means that unless you know exactly where class is going to be held you will almost invariably be late and have prefects chasing after you for the crime of somehow taking 20 minutes to run from one side of the school to another — a distance that couldn't be much more than 500 metres. Likewise Jimmy is kept to strict time constraints after school hours — stay up past about 1am and the screen will go blurry like you are drunk. Stay up until 2am and you will fall unconscious. This after





## SELF PARODY

Canis Canem Edit comes across a bit like Rockstar going for a bit of self parody. Probably the most controversial developer around at the moment (maybe *Running With Scissors* could take the crown with *Postal 3*) having been criticised for everything under the sun, it appears as though Rockstar Vancouver have, in a joking manner, gone against everything the company has been accused of doing. GTA has been accused of rewarding players for murder and rape but Canis Canem Edit goes to the opposite end of the scale. Violence is punished if you are caught. Lateness is punished. Being out of uniform is punished. Riding a scooter without a helmet is punished (and the first time you get the scooter you have no chance to put a helmet on). Stay up too late and you're punished. Don't perform a punishment well and you're punished.



I fart in your general direction!



Wilks in his younger years

**>>> There's no blood, no death and no crime aside from a few petty pranks and a little defacing of public property <<<**

hours time stricture is especially punishing, once again due to the time scaling, as a simple mission can take subjective hours to finish. Fall asleep and you fail the mission and have to start over again, fail a mission and you'll have to wait another day to start again due to the lack of time left on the clock.

Fighting is par for the course in Canis Canem Edit — it's rare that you will go for five minutes without someone attacking you for no readily apparent reason (even when you are loved by their respective faction). Jimmy is handy with his fists and anyone who played Rockstar's *The Warriors* will be quite familiar with the context sensitive combat system. For the most part the fighting engine works well with some nicely animated moves, a number of extra moves and combos that can be unlocked by completing gym class or learning from the bum that lives in the school grounds. The lock on system is less successful unfortunately. Li locks

onto the nearest target (and puts Jimmy into a defensive stance) but often the camera will swing wildly to try to get to the best position, ironically obscuring the fight or sometimes even placing the opponent off screen. Changing targets with the d-pad also seems to be a trial and error affair as your target may change without your orientation changing, sticking you with your back to the opponent.

Constantly fighting with the camera is one of the real downfalls of Canis Canem Edit. During combat it often veers about in an attempt to highlight the enemy, on foot or on a bike/skateboard it's sluggish and has a habit of changing orientation if you take a corner too quickly or go over a rise, and indoors it has definite trouble navigating around obstacles and walls. The other major problem is that CCE has a huge number of mini-games but with the exception of the classes none of them are particularly well fleshed out; enter a bike race

and you'll mash the x button (the generic "run" button for bikes, skateboards and actual running) and fight with the camera for far too long. Stealth missions (thankfully only a few are mandatory) don't really work in a game where there is no real stealth mechanic aside from jumping into a bin occasionally, and once again you're constantly fighting with the camera.

Thanks to the smaller environment of Bullworth Academy and the surrounding town, CCE is probably the best looking game utilising the GTA engine. Characters are well animated and have a good deal of personality but still look rather dated in comparison to some final generation PS2 titles.

Maybe we've just been spoiled by Rockstar soundtracks in the past but Canis Canem Edit misses a great opportunity by opting for a rather repetitive, Danny Elfman-lite orchestral soundtrack rather than an actual track listing — songs from school movies and TV shows would have worked a real treat. That said, the voice acting is for the most part excellent and the script, with a few glaring exceptions, is funny and clever. <<<

## AVAILABLE ON:

360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / Xbox / GCN

## DETAILS:

**CATEGORY:** Adventure

**PLAYERS:** 1

**DEVELOPER:** Rockstar Vancouver

**PUBLISHER:** Rockstar

**PRICE:** \$99.95

**RATING:** M

**AVAILABLE:** Now

## HYPER VERDICT:

**PLUS:** Clever script, some novel missions, well constructed characters.

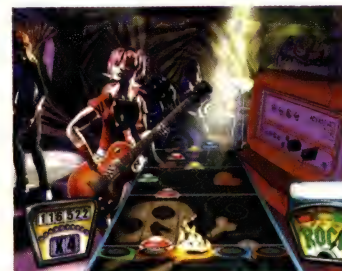
**MINUS:** Time dilation, dodgy camera, generic mini-games.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
85	87	80
OVERALL		
78		
Needs a few more classes before graduation.		





This girl needs lessons on ROCK poses!



Also included is the ability to practice specific sections of songs that are giving you trouble, as well as the ability to slow down the pace to practice your fingerwork. Oh, and the game is also coming to Xbox 360 early next year.



Gotta love the pompadour

# Guitar Hero II

DANIEL WILKS is a Guitar Zero

The dulcet strains of bad covers of good songs, or vice versa if you think guitar wailing cock rock is a bad thing, can only mean one thing; Guitar Hero has returned to the office. Unfortunately this also means a return to Staines thrusting his crotch rhythmically at anyone who passes close enough, his face contorted in a bizarre rockgasm as he fingers his way through the opening chords of Sweet Child O' Mine. It also means a return to the most disgustingly awesome band name ever (Bukkake Jihad) and Darren "Hottie Funbags" Wells coming out of his PCPP cocoon and rocking us with his near perfect extreme rock stylings. You take the good with the bad I suppose. Starting with the good, Guitar Hero II contains everything that made the original game so great and ups the ante with more songs, the ability to play bass guitar in multiplayer, a character called Lars Umlaut and the most awesomely awesome purchasable song — Strong Bad singing Trogdor! The real Strong Bad, not "as made

famous by". The bad? Well, Staines' crotch obviously, the fact that I have very little independent control of my little finger so I basically suck at anything over medium difficulty and the house band's cover of Killing in the Name Of is atrocious.

## MORE CHALLENGING

So what if some of the covers are rather poor though, there are 40 of them unlockable in the career mode and a bunch more available to buy through the interface so you're sure to find a number to appeal. Like the original game the tracks are organised into progressive levels of difficulty that become steadily unlocked as you progress through the career mode. The general difficulty of the game (aside from the extremely easy easy mode) seems to have been upped a little to give players more of a challenge but it never gets frustrating. The choice of tracks is generally strong and readily recognisable, even for those who like their rock a little less hard or almost devoid of cock, including such timeless hits as Sweet Child O' Mine by the Gunners,

Warrant's Cherry Pie, Skynard's Freebird and more recently (and locally), Woman by Wolfmother. Some of the more eclectic choices such as Jessica by the Allman Brothers, Reverend Horton Heat's Psychobilly Freakout and Dick Dale's Misirlou rank up there as some of the most fun to play as they steer away from the power chord into surf and psychobilly frantic fingering and picking.

If there's any real criticism to be leveled at Guitar Hero II it is that playing bass in multiplayer is often (though obviously not in the case of John the Fisherman by Primus) not as much fun as playing lead guitar but ultimately that's the nature of the beast — bass playing is, for the most part a lot steadier than lead guitar when it comes to rhythms. Other than that small gripe, Guitar Hero II is fantastic. Combine great songs done badly, bad songs done well, mates, beer and pelvic gymnastics and you have a nigh on perfect party game. <<

## AVAILABLE ON:

360 (PS2 / Wii / PC) PS2

## DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Rhythm

PLAYERS: 1-2

DEVELOPER: Harmonix

PUBLISHER: Activision

PRICE: \$79.95 (software), \$149.95 (bundle with guitar)

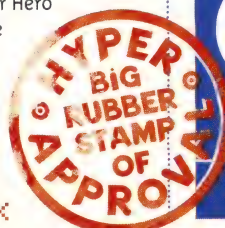
RATING: G • AVAILABLE: November 15

## HYPER VERDICT:

**PLUS:** Huge number of tracks, Trogdor!, Beating Psychobilly Freakout.

**MINUS:** Some really average covers.

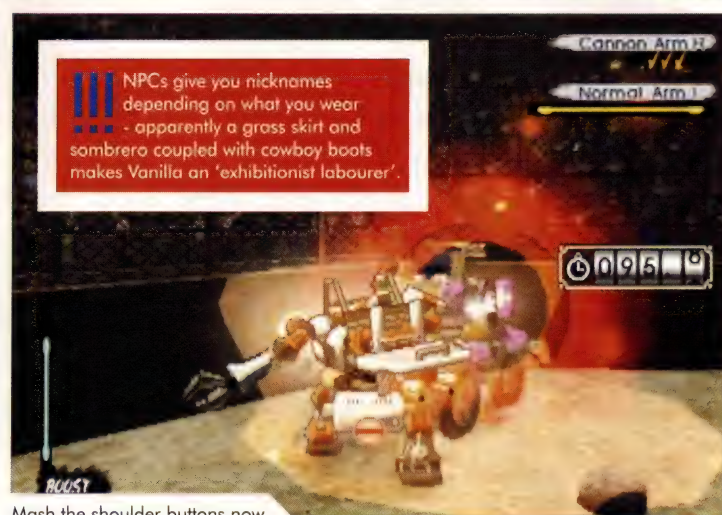
VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
80	91	93
OVERALL		
22		
Assume the rock position.		







BIG BOSS BATTLE!



Mash the shoulder buttons now

# Steambot Chronicles

**DANIEL WILKS** would have called his character Vanilla anyway

Here at Hyper, when we have an option to name a character we usually call them one of a few juvenile things – Hottie Funbags, Rico Suave, Yuri Spadeface or some permutation of Vanilla Ice. Imagine our surprise and delight then, when we discovered that the name of SC's protagonist is Vanilla. This feeling of delight and surprise has followed us through the game, not simply because we didn't have to name the main character to fit into one of our silly little in-jokes but because, basically, Steambot Chronicles is one of those delightfully surprising games that don't come out often enough.

## WH... WH... WHERE AM I?

Starting with the rather cliché story of an amnesiac waking up on a beach, Steambot Chronicles combines elements of RPG, Virtual On style robot fighting, GTA inspired freedom, rhythm games and Animal Crossing-esque charming mundanity to craft a compelling yet open story and game world. A kind of "what if" post industrial revolution Earth, Steambot Chronicles introduces the trot mobile as the number one form

of transport; petrol powered mecha that are endlessly upgradeable and useful for all manner of tasks. After waking up on the beach and meeting his pretty future potential love interest Coriander (all of the good guys appear to be named after a herb or spice), Vanilla is given access to his first trot, a machine that forms much of the basis of the gameplay of Steambot Chronicles.

Trots control using both thumbsticks, with the L1 and R1 buttons controlling each arm separately, each of which can be upgraded with various weapons and tools ranging from simple swords through to rocket launchers. Aside from combat, trots can be upgraded for carrying cargo, passengers, mining fossils and the like; all of which are activities the player can undertake if they so choose. Although there is a running story throughout, players are free to do as they choose for the most part until they decide to pick up the story again so you can run around the towns performing tasks for various people, wooing ladies, shuttling passengers around, taking over criminal organisations, becoming

a trot gladiator, trading goods between towns, playing the stock market, digging for fossils to restock a museum, brushing up on your billiards skills, cooking, finding and buying numerous outfits for Vanilla, playing various instruments to impress crowds or joining Coriander's world famous band, joining a secret society and what have you. There is a huge amount to do in Steambot Chronicles; more than enough to keep you enthralled even if the well written and rather compelling main story isn't enough to hold your attention.

If there's anything stopping Steambot Chronicles from being truly great it is the fact that technically the game can't live up to its creativity. Load times are frequent, and the game world itself looks a little flat and dated, occasionally having framerate issues for no readily apparent reason. While the voice acting is generally very good and the ability to choose the tone of most responses is great, the soundtrack (aside from Coriander's soft rock ballads) sounds like a best of 80s Japanese RPG midi compilation and grates on the nerves after a short while. <<

## AVAILABLE ON:

360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / Xbox / GBA

## DETAILS:

**CATEGORY:** RPG/World Sim

**PLAYERS:** 1

**DEVELOPER:** Irem Software Engineering

**PUBLISHER:** 505

**PRICE:** \$79.95

**RATING:** PG

**AVAILABLE:** Now

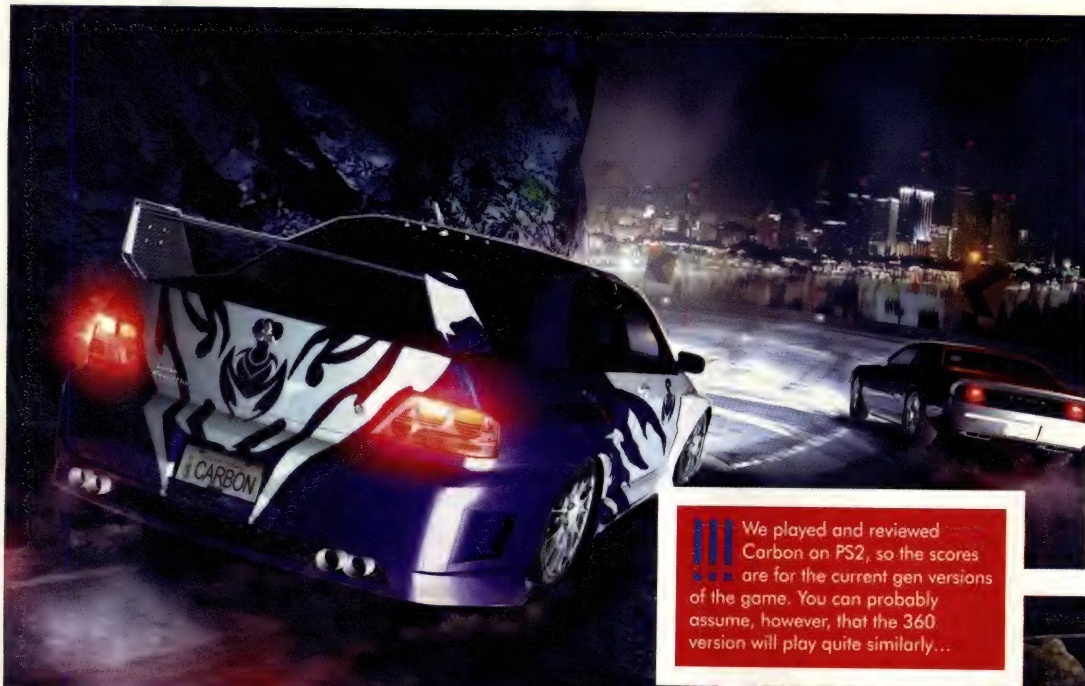
## HYPER VERDICT:

**PLUS:** Huge amount of freedom, clever musical rhythm games, Pimp My Trot.

**MINUS:** Slowdown, load times.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
81	78	86
OVERALL		
84		
The world needs trot-mobiles.		





This car would be faster if it was red



The Fast and the Furious: Team Hyper

We played and reviewed Carbon on PS2, so the scores are for the current gen versions of the game. You can probably assume, however, that the 360 version will play quite similarly...

# Need for Speed: Carbon

CAM SHEA tunes in and drops out

It always strikes me as somewhat farcical when games and films try to portray tuners as the ultimate bad-asses. I mean, sure, illegal street racing is dangerous and everything, but I just can't take the whole 'wrong side of the tracks' tough guy thing seriously when they're rolling in a car that costs more than most people make in years. 'Oh, poor little rich boy has a problem with another poor little rich boy?' Boo hoo.

## LITTLE RICH BOYS & THEIR TOYS

With that in mind I really should hate the approach EA have taken for Carbon. The game is framed around a basic story, with your character returning to Palmont city to deal with the aftermath of a street race that the cops busted, and to win back the respect of his former friends — who thought you skipped out of town with the race prize money. Over the course of the game you'll battle for control of each territory in the city and face off against the bosses that control them. Plus, you'll find out a little bit more about that fateful race night, and whether the

dawg with the shifty eyes really had anything to do with it. It's actually not a bad way to structure the game.

EA made a big deal out of the canyon racing for this game, but it doesn't actually play that significant a role, with the bulk of the game taking place on city streets and along freeways. The canyon runs are mostly saved for the boss battles, where you race the canyon twice — once behind the boss, trying to stay as close as you can, and the other in the lead, trying to stay as far ahead as you can. If you trail him better than he trails you (or if you can overtake him and stay in the lead for a short time), you win.

Other than that Carbon's racing will feel very familiar to the fans — perhaps overly so. The handling, nitrous, slow time, customisation options, cop presence and race types are all either identical or very similar. It's still fun, mind you, but crucially, it's just not that challenging. This is not a game where you'll have to hit restart much. Part of this lack of challenge comes from familiarity, but part of

it is to do with the new team mate system. Throughout the game you'll hook up with people that want to join your team. In most races you can choose one partner to race with you, and they bring different skills and bonuses to the table. The Scout for instance, will tell you about any short cuts coming up, while the Drafter gets out ahead of you so you can draft behind him for a slingshot speed boost. For my money, however, the most useful is the Blocker. Activating him sees him go after your opponents to try and slow them down. He can be used quite tactically too — just keep an eye on the mini-map and see where he's positioned relative to your opponents. If he's just in front and has room to move, chances are if you activate him he'll be able to brake straight into them. So yeah, team mates should be a really cool inclusion, but in a pack of four, they throw the difficulty level way off. Suddenly you're only racing against two opponents... plus you have a tool to give yourself the advantage... plus if your team mate wins, you win. <<<

## AVAILABLE ON:

360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / Xbox / DCU

## DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Racing

PLAYERS: 1-2

DEVELOPER: EA Black Box

PUBLISHER: EA

PRICE: \$89.95 (PS2, Xbox), \$79.95 (PC), \$119.95 (360)

RATING: TBC • AVAILABLE: Now

## HYPER VERDICT:

**PLUS:** Large gameworld, drive with a badly textured Oz flag on the bonnet!

**MINUS:** Easy, drift course mechanics suck, cutscene 'actors', very familiar.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
82	80	83
OVERALL		
80		
It's entertaining, but Carbon isn't a big step forward for the series...		



# ANIMEBLITZ



ON  NOVEMBER 8



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Based on a best-selling manga comic  
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Kick 'em in the grill Pete



According to the Konami timeline, the PES series all began with a game called Hyper Soccer back in 1992! If only they kept the name.



Insert Hack the Bone caption here

# Pro Evolution Soccer 6

**ELIOT FISH** is going to marry this game one day...

Well, here we are, another year older and sitting in front of yet another instalment of Pro Evolution Soccer — the game that sheds its skin every year like some kind of reptile, only to re-emerge younger, stronger and yet pretty much the very same beast.

If you're a PES aficionado, then you don't need to be told how skilfully Konami handles this game every year. It still looks like PES, plays like PES, unfortunately still sounds like PES, but there are enough subtle improvements and differences in PES 6 to make it worth playing again for another 12 months.

## THUS AND VERILY!

The most obvious changes are thus: the International Challenge mode, in which you guide an international side through qualification and then the finals of a World Cup (yes, in the options, you can rename all the cups and tournaments, so it won't have to be the International Cup that you're gunning for); new officially licensed clubs, including Manchester United (we also noted that Juventus were indeed banished from the Serie

A, so sorry to all you Juve fans); and the Socceroos are officially in, with improved stats to boot.

Master League has seen quite a tweak, with an all-new set-up that allows you to adjust all sorts of options before you kick off a full season. You can opt for your players to never age (thus, their stats never improve or decrease) which is a nice feature, although most will want to start out with a crappy, young side and turn them into superstars.

The tactics screen now has new "auto" options, for those of you who don't want to fiddle with all the details. It will automatically select a side based on stats or form, plus select a formation that best suits your squad.

Out on the pitch, the referee must have finally swallowed his whistle, because PES 6 doesn't stop and start like PES 5 did every time someone pressed for the ball. Now play is allowed to continue on far more often, making for a more fluid and fast game, with plenty of non-stop action. If the ref does blow for a foul, you have the option to quickly take the free kick with a pass,

instead of waiting for everyone to move into position, which is great if your opponent has been caught out with too many men up field.

Slide-tackling is now encouraged, as it's easier to put in a well-timed tackle that wins the ball, rather than always up-ending the opponent. A quick tap of the R2 can have you hurdling over a challenge too.

The old X pass has been improved, allowing for some powerful medium range passing. It's also easier to shield the ball and get away with some close quarters control and dribbling, so playing through the middle isn't quite as impenetrable as in past games.

As is the way with any new PES, the graphics have also been brought up yet another notch, with some beautiful new animations, crisp kits, and even better player likenesses.

We could rattle on forever, but honestly you're better off just running out to your local shop and grabbing it. <<

## AVAILABLE ON:

360 / PS3 / Wii PC / PS2 / Xbox / GBA

## DETAILS:

**CATEGORY:** Sports Sim

**PLAYERS:** 1-8

**DEVELOPER:** Konami

**PUBLISHER:** Konami

**PRICE:** \$79.95 - \$119.95

**RATING:** G

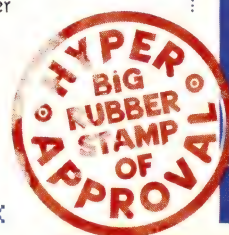
**AVAILABLE:** Now

## HYPER VERDICT:

**PLUS:** Tighter dribbling, refined Master League... hey, it's PES again.

**MINUS:** The commentary is still totally shit after all these years.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
89	78	96
OVERALL		
95		
It just keeps on keeping on, as they say.		



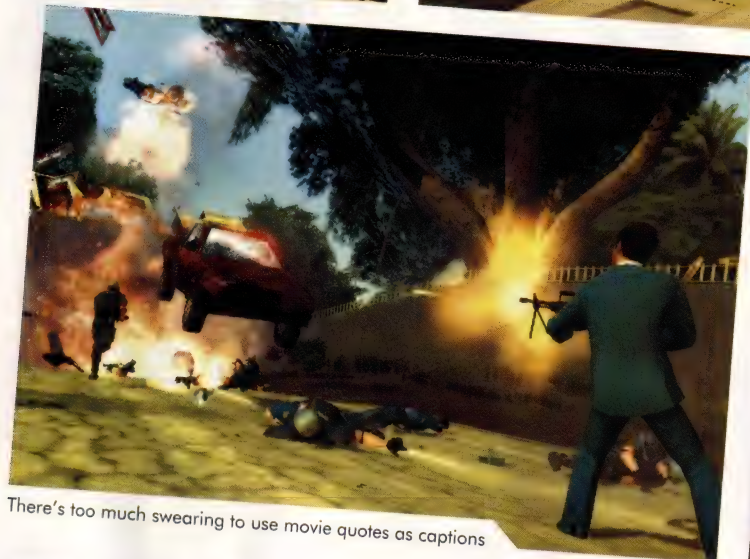




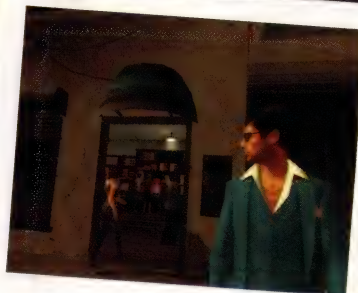
Scarface has an incredible cast of voice talent as you'll see when you watch the intro...



Pictured: Two pieces of phallic imagery



There's too much swearing to use movie quotes as captions



# Scarface: THE WORLD IS YOURS

**CAM SHEA** vociferously insults some corpses

I'll be honest with you. I really didn't think much of Saint's Row. Granted, I didn't give it all that much time to 'wow me', but the time I did spend with it felt soulless. Sure, it has next gen bells and whistles, but to me it's just an inspiration less GTA wanna be with no personality of its own. And despite trying to be so ghetto, what with all the swearing, violence, prostitutes and blunt smoking, the simple fact is that your gang looks like it stepped out of a United Colours of Benetton ad.

Scarface, on the other hand, may also play by the conventions of the genre, and you may feel like you've done a lot of this before. But it's authentic as hell. And that's hugely important. You get to step into the shoes of one of cinema's most infamous protagonists, Tony "f\*\*king" Montana. And boy does it feel good.

## BLOW 'EM AWAY

You all probably know the set up by now. Tony survives Sosa's assault on his mansion, but it's shot to shit and seized by the cops, leaving him with nothing. Time to rebuild his empire, the only way he knows how

— through drug dealing, intimidation and violence. Over the course of the game you'll establish a network of contacts, buy and sell coke, launder money, buy fronts, take over enemy territory, renovate your mansion, expand your arsenal (yes, including a chainsaw), hire a variety of employees, bribe the cops and spend vast sums of money on a massive list of 'Exotics' such as cars, boats, unique collectables, equipment and décor for the mansion, and even a host of businesses, such as Montana Records and Montana Financial. It really is compelling stuff, and you'll keep playing just to hit the next level of reputation and buy some more stuff. Most of it is practical too — hire a driver and buy a super fast car and you can get it delivered with a single phone call, avoiding the need to jack random cars and get the cops on your tail. From there the driver will come along to aid you on your next mission, and you even have access to your arsenal simply by popping the boot.

While Scarface does lead you around for the first hour or so, it opens up a fair bit more after the introductions have been made.

You'll have a bunch of missions and other things you can do at any one time, and while they may not be stunningly original — protect this guy, drop drugs at these points and so on, by and large they're good fun, if a little repetitive. The gunplay is simple but smooth, with a lock-on system that allows you to aim at different parts of the body while locked on — useful for headshots and building up your 'balls' meter quickly (you also get bonus balls points for insulting an enemy after you kill him), which, when full gives you a limited period of unlimited ammo and invulnerability. The driving engine is excellent, and on Xbox the game looks really great.

What really makes Scarface a winner though, as I mentioned before, is its dedication to the source material. The dialogue is brilliant, not only in the excellent cutscenes, but even when you stop to have random conversations with people on the street, and the Tony sound alike is bang on the money. There's plenty more to talk about with Scarface, but if you're a fan of the film you should probably just go buy it. <<

## AVAILABLE ON:

360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / Xbox / DCN

## DETAILS:

**CATEGORY:** Open-world drug dealing

**PLAYERS:** 1

**DEVELOPER:** Radical Entertainment

**PUBLISHER:** Sierra

**PRICE:** \$69.95 (PC), \$79.95 (PS2, Xbox)

**RATING:** MA 15+

**AVAILABLE:** November 16

## HYPER VERDICT:

**PLUS:** Stars Amos, cutscenes and dialogue, authentic, soundtrack.

**MINUS:** Headshot blood spray looks terrible, too many filler missions.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
85	93	84

## OVERALL

84

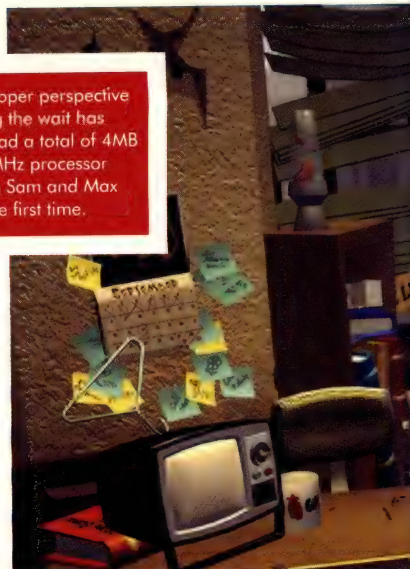
One of the best licensed games in recent times.





The original Raving Rabbid...

You want proper perspective on how long the wait has been? We had a total of 4MB of RAM and a 33MHz processor back when playing Sam and Max Hit the Road for the first time.



So Max, is it a boy or a girl?



# Sam and Max: CULTURE SHOCK

A rabbit once bit **TIM HENDERSON'S** head off

▶ This has got to be some sort of sick joke. The gaming world gushed all over Sam and Max Hit the Road back when it hit home PCs in 1993. That was thirteen years ago, an unlucky number for many people, and it would make sense that dog (Sam) and his somewhat deranged rabbit sidekick (Max) would make us wait just that long before their adventures would grace our systems once again. It seems they're kind of like Andy Kaufman, only not really dead.

## WHITE MEN CAN'T GROW AFROS

Sam and Max: Culture Shock throws players cerebellum-first into a videotape conspiracy and a grudge that has something to do with expired childhood stardom. Yes, you read that correctly, and you can only expect that things will get even more ludicrous as they progress. For now, however, it's a self-contained tale to serve as an opening chapter for the TV-like episodic structure in

which Sam and Max Season 1 is to be delivered. As such it's very short, no more than five hours long, but it's also remarkably good and highly accessible fun from the very moment the opening credits start to roll.

Culture Shock uses a traditional point and click mouse interface, and it couldn't possibly be any more straightforward. In fact, while we're glad that it's not as fiddly as it was back in 1993, it is perhaps just a little bit too simplified. The mouse cursor is a simple arrow that becomes highlighted when over a point of interest. Click the left mouse button and Sam will look at, interact with or take the object in question without any player specification. Right click and, well, nothing much happens. This does streamline the game a lot and it certainly ensures that it's immediately accessible with no explanation needed, but veterans of the genre (and fans of the original Sam and Max — of



whom there will be plenty) will probably feel that their involvement in solving the puzzles in the game has been dumbed down.

All of which is somewhat forgivable, simply because every single puzzle present in this game is equal parts creative, bizarre, logical and enjoyable. There isn't a single obscure developer's puzzle to be found, and in general they will be just enough to get you thinking without causing you to go barking mad. There are some conversational tasks that are a little weak by comparison to the object puzzles, but it's nice that they can be randomised a little and the overall effort is still very strong.



## SODA POPPING GOOD

In terms of presentation, Culture Shock is right on the money. The visuals aren't going to hold up to the latest titles that take advantage of all of your video card's fancy new features, and a few extra polygons to smooth things out would be nice, but the graphics still do a remarkably effective job of accurately recapturing locations that many people have vivid 2D memories of; that they evoke nostalgia so effectively is itself a great compliment to the design. The soundtrack is quintessential Sam and Max in all its swish, jazzy glory, and while we regret to report that the original voices for the duo have





Pull my finger little buddy



Proof that not all children are beautiful



Go with worse - everything is a step up from there

## It's a bizarre and unique sense of charm that lifts Culture Shock up and makes it more than a sum of its parts

been lost, the new actors sound quite close to their predecessors and, more importantly, deliver their lines in perfect accord with the personalities of the characters that they are portraying.

Much as with the original, it's a bizarre and unique sense of charm that lifts Culture Shock up and makes it more than a sum of its parts. Hit the Road is still one of the funniest games you could ever hope to play, so it's a huge accomplishment that Culture Shock actually lives up to this. Sam frequently speaks in overly articulate, nonsensical speech patterns, and Max reliably



backchats him. This does become a little predictable, and at times it seems to be trying too hard, but the sheer persistence of the humour ensures that there's always going to be something else to laugh at just around the corner. There are also some cute little touches laced around the place, such as Sam casually punching Max skyward every time the little rabbit thing is in his way.

Max, while mostly there to provide inane banter and gratuitous comic violence, also has his uses. He isn't a regular part of your item inventory this time around, but speaking to him will often provide small hints disguised as innocent insanity. This system isn't as developed as the wonderful 'one nugget of info at a time' system that Telltale implemented into their Bone games, but it doesn't break the gameworld illusion as much, and the system's simplicity may be just as well considering the game's relatively low difficulty level.

Despite being easy, though, we still appreciate the security measure that the game takes in frequently quicksaving player progress.

Action fans won't find much to like here outside of a driving section that's involved in a couple of puzzles, can be returned to at will, and is a huge piece of fanservice for fans of Hit the Road. Actually, if you're expecting anything other than a traditional point and click title, you should probably steer clear of Culture Shock. This game isn't out to innovate. It's out to recapture an almost-lost moment in gaming and to provide a high quality adventure of the purest sort. Considering that even Broken Sword 4 had stealth sections tacked on, Culture Shock is actually oddly unique in its backward approach to adventure gameplay. Honestly, this is exactly what we had hoped for from a new Sam and Max game, and a lot of its appeal actually comes from its refusal to stray from the formula. If the upcoming chapters can successfully build upon this one, then Sam and Max Season 1 may actually achieve the impossible and live up to the original's legacy. <<

### AVAILABLE ON:

360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / Xbox / GCM

### DETAILS:

**CATEGORY:** Adventure

**PLAYERS:** 1

**DEVELOPER:** Telltale Games

**PUBLISHER:** Telltale Games

**PRICE:** TBA

**RATING:** TBA

**AVAILABLE:** Now

### HYPER VERDICT:

**PLUS:** Highly accessible; almost as funny as the original.

**MINUS:** Episodic content is a tease!

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
84	85	85
OVERALL		
86		
Barely the tip of the iceberg – we can't wait to see where it goes from here!		





# DREAMBLADE

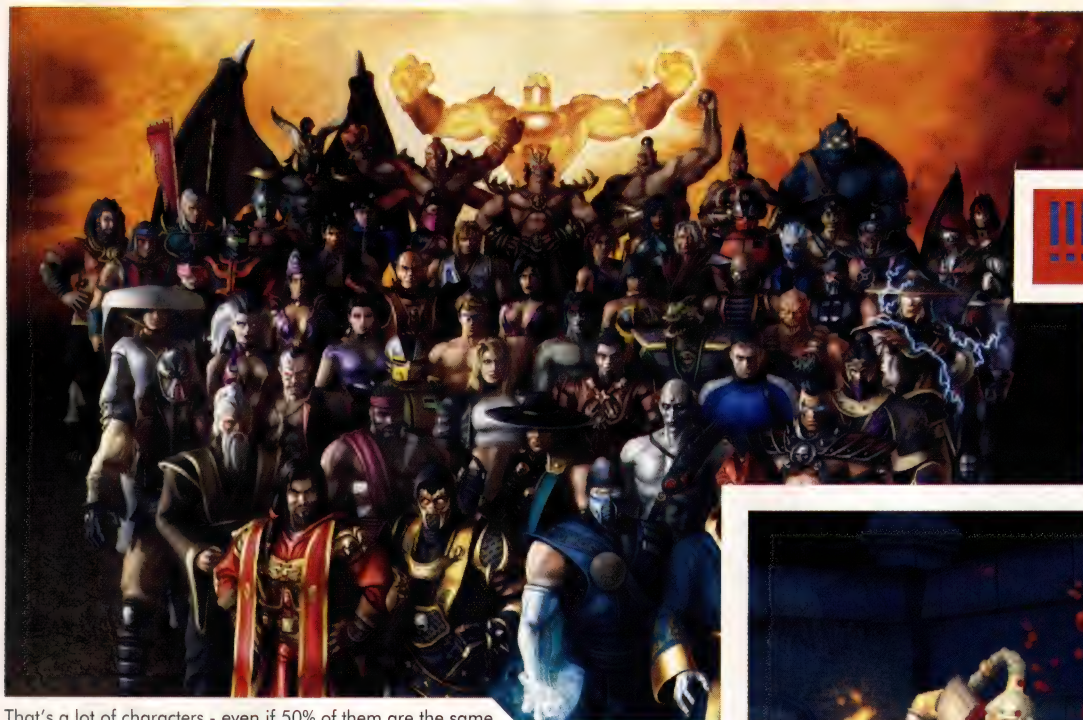
COLLECTABLE *Miniatures* GAME

[www.dreamblademinis.com](http://www.dreamblademinis.com)

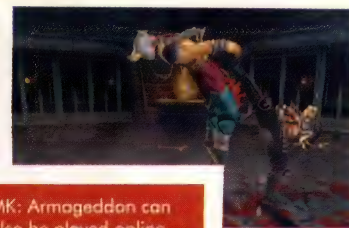
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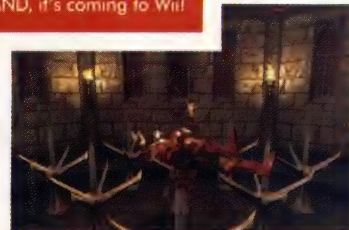




That's a lot of characters - even if 50% of them are the same



MK: Armageddon can also be played online. AND, it's coming to Wii!



When RoShamBo goes horribly wrong

# Mortal Kombat: Armageddon

**DANIEL WILKS** doesn't weep for this fatality

If Armageddon is truly the last MK game as we know it (and it will be - on current gen - according to Midway) then you would be hard pressed to find a better game to exit on. While not perfect by a long shot, MK:A contains pretty much everything you could want from a fighting game; good controls, decent looks, a ton and a half of unlockable content, multiple game modes and the most robust create a fighter mode we have ever seen. There's also a hell of a lot of fighters to play with. As soon as you start the game players have access to 58 of the 62 playable characters. By any stretch of the imagination that's a huge number of fighters to choose from, even if a good number of them control in basically the same fashion.

## VIOLENT THRILLS

Unlike the last two iterations of the Mortal Kombat fighting games, Armageddon features only two fighting styles per character rather than three; a hand-to-hand style and a weapons style. This has the benefit of significantly simplifying the combat without actually making

the engine any less robust. Canned combos and juggles are still the name of the game so if you're looking for a more tactical fighter you should still look the way of Tekken or Virtua Fighter, but if you're after some violent arcade thrills then this is really the game for you.

Aside from the straight arcade mode, MK: A features a more fully fleshed out Konquest style game that sees players take the role of Taven, demigod son of one of the gods of Edenia and a mortal, questing through the realms to find the "prize", beat his younger (though older - this is explained in the simplistic story) brother and kill a lot of people. Forgoing the simple tutorial style of Deadly Alliance or the free roaming of Deception, Konquest in Armageddon takes a leaf from MK: Shaolin Monks to make a fast paced beat 'em up with numerous minions to kill and the occasional MK style boss battle, as well as some big event style boss battles. Along the way you can pick up numerous items that can be used to dress your character in Create a Fighter, unlock a load of content ranging

from levels to hidden characters, and pick up a craptone of Koinos to buy the rest from the significantly smaller and easier to navigate Krypt and buy moves for your fighter.

This last use of koinos is the most important as every move you assign, as well as most costuming options, will cost you. And the money can add up. You can buy moves for every conceivable button combination for your fighter; you're not only assigning attacks to the four face buttons but also to face buttons with directional input as well as special moves. With 120 base fighting styles to choose from there's a hell of a lot of customisation available. Making a character is almost a game unto itself and a very time consuming one if you put in the effort.

Although not the prettiest of games - the models look like they are made of slightly melted plastic for the most part - MK: Armageddon animates well, has some decent if repetitive tunes and features more content than you could get through in just a few sittings. It's a fine way to see out the current generation. <<

## AVAILABLE ON:

360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / Xbox

## DETAILS:

**CATEGORY:** Fighting

**PLAYERS:** 1-2

**DEVELOPER:** Midway

**PUBLISHER:** Midway

**PRICE:** \$79.95

**RATING:** MA 15+

**AVAILABLE:** Now

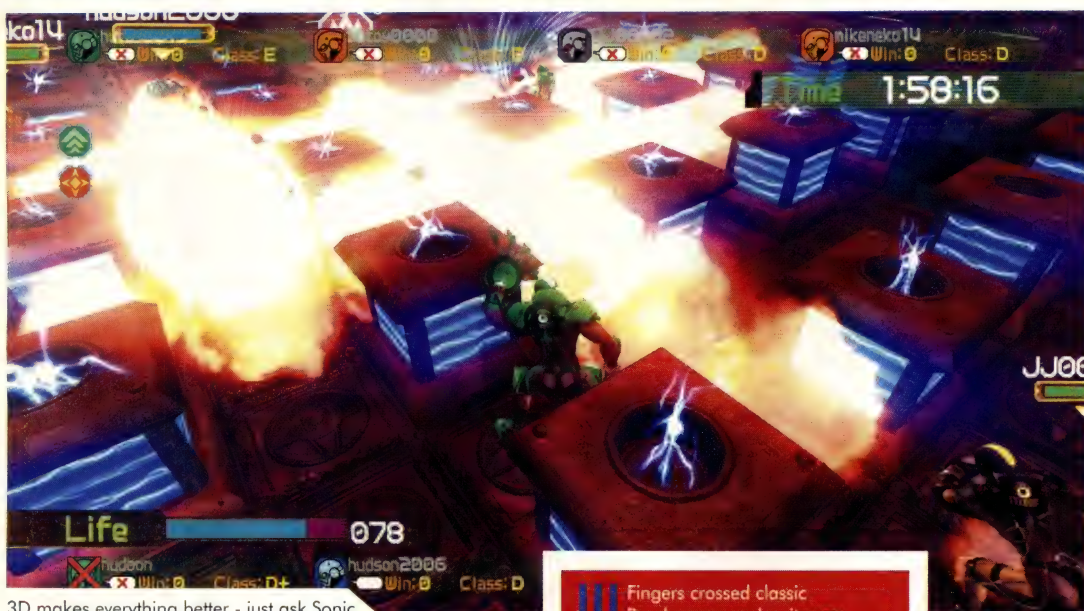
## HYPER VERDICT:

**PLUS:** Huge number of characters, Create a Fighter.

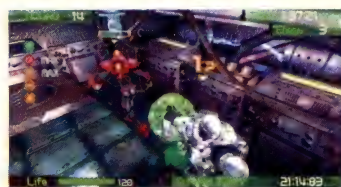
**MINUS:** Many fighters are too similar, Karting is dull.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
78	80	88
OVERALL		
86		
A fine way to see out the venerable franchise on the current generation.		

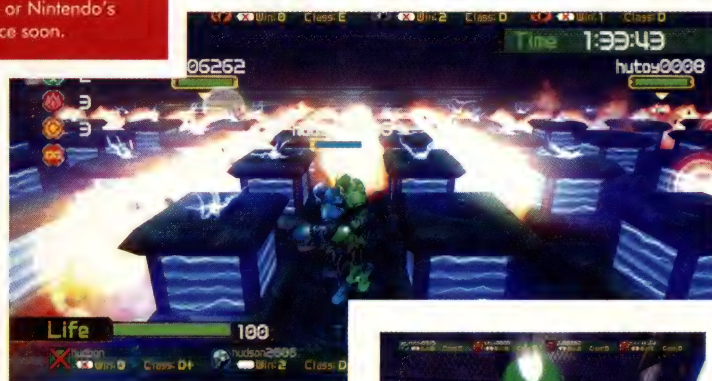




3D makes everything better - just ask Sonic



Terrorist Bomberman



# Bomberman: Act Zero

Bomberman is dead - it's official, declares **JONATHAN IKEDA**

Bomberman's popularity has been on the wane ever since the end of his glorious Super Famicom/PC Engine era, and it's easy to see why. Instead of pushing ahead with the inspired formula of early '90s Bomberman games, Hudson attempted to move its mascot into other areas - the worlds of 3D platformers (Bomberman 64), RTS (Bomberman Wars) and cutesy mini-game compendia (the Bomberman Land series).

## SIX FEET UNDER

For whatever reason, Hudson seems reluctant to return to the great heights of Super Bomberman 5 and Bomberman '94. Instead, the developer has effectively killed off Bomberman's reputation with Act Zero, an Xbox 360 game which would have been better off shelved.

Although this isn't as expensive as some 360 games, there really isn't much here in the way of a challenge. Offline,

as a single-player experience, there's just a series of battles against CPU-controlled bots to keep you distracted from the nagging sensation that something is terribly wrong. It's simply the multiplayer game, but presented without human competition. And it becomes very tedious very quickly. Sadly, there isn't even a traditional multiplayer mode to turn to. Instead, Act Zero limits its multiplayer options to online ones.

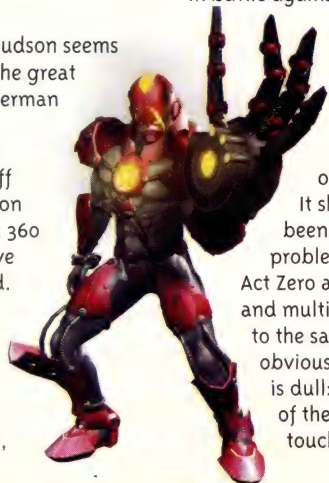
In battle against up to seven

other players on Xbox Live, Bomberman: Act Zero delivers multiplayer Bomberman on a global scale.

It should have been superb, but the problems which malign Act Zero affect its solo and multiplayer modes to the same extent. Most obviously, the gameplay is dull: there are none of the imaginative touches seen in classic

Bomberman titles - no kangeroos with boxing gloves, for example, and very few interesting pick-ups, while the fully 3D game engine serves only to make character control feel sluggish and awkward. Bomberman should be about Bomberman sprites dashing through tight grids - it should not feature gangly polygonal characters jogging along wide paths.

And if you really want proof that Hudson Soft has lost the plot, check out Act Zero's First Person Bomber mode. Here the developer highlights its own mistakes, giving a close-up and gruesome view of the action. It serves no beneficial purpose - it actually makes the game less fun to play, and only shows the ugliness of Act Zero's visual style in unnecessary detail. This review isn't about fear of change (we've played Bomberman in 3D before, of course), it's about a developer's misdirection and depressingly poor execution. Hudson should have brought a revamped version of classic Bomberman to Xbox Live instead of releasing Act Zero. <<



## AVAILABLE ON:

360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / Xbox / GCN

## DETAILS:

**CATEGORY:** Puzzle Action

**PLAYERS:** 1-8

**DEVELOPER:** Hudson

**PUBLISHER:** Hudson Soft

**PRICE:** \$89.95

**RATING:** TBC

**AVAILABLE:** Late November

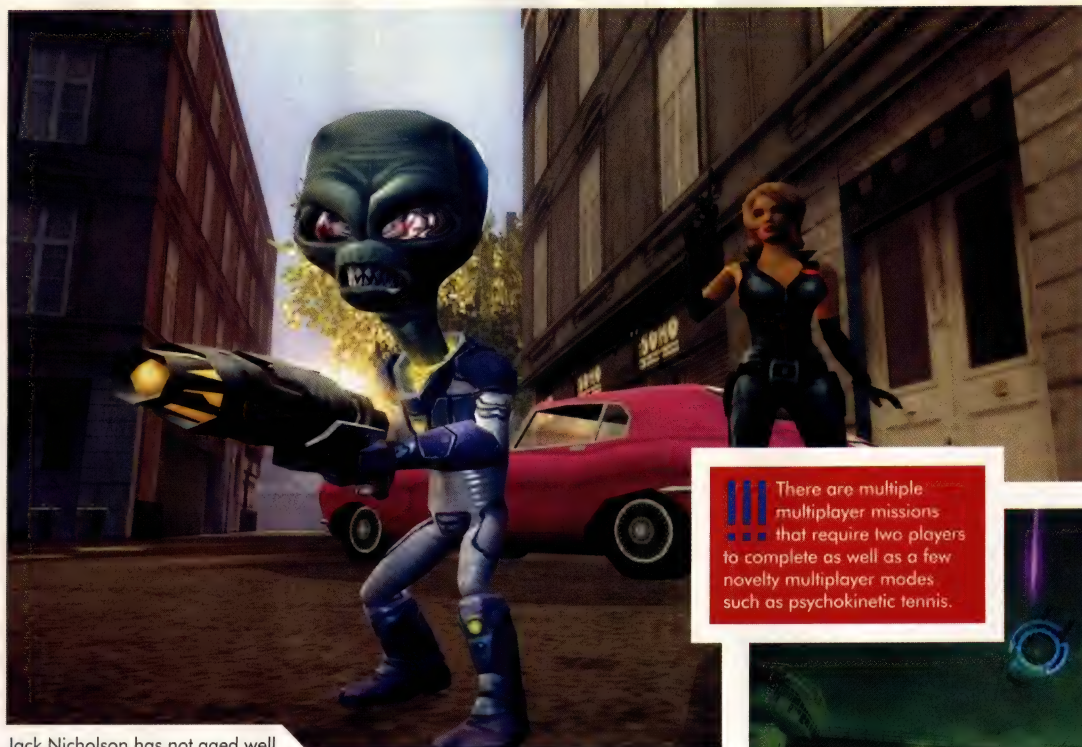
## HYPER VERDICT:

**PLUS:** Online multiplayer is functional, although it's not that fun.

**MINUS:** Dodgy style, clunky gameplay, not enough game, et cetera...

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
45	45	35
OVERALL		
32		
Turns the genius of Bomberman's concept into a rusty mess.		

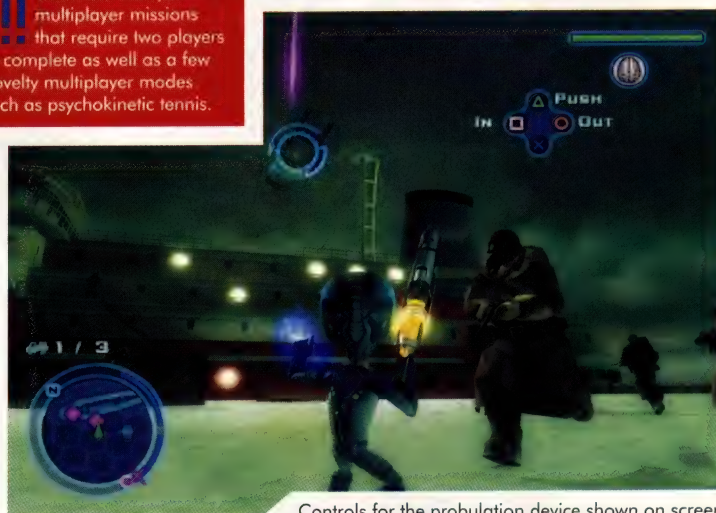
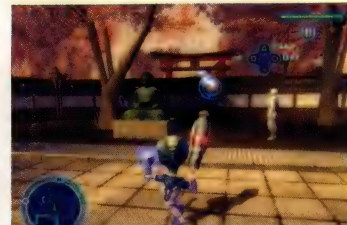




Jack Nicholson has not aged well



There are multiple multiplayer missions that require two players to complete as well as a few novelty multiplayer modes such as psychokinetic tennis.



Controls for the probolusion device shown on screen

# Destroy All Humans! 2: MAKE WAR, NOT LOVE

**DIRTY WATCH**(es) the skies... again

It's around a decade after the events of the first game and Crypto is still up to his old tricks; hiding amongst the humans, feeling strangely attracted to women, speaking like Jack Nicholson (or Christian Slater when he's drunk enough to bite a cop) and, of course, trying to take over the world and farm those pesky humans. It should be noted that come the 1960s (the setting of the game), the pesky humans are even peskier than they were in the 50s. Gone is inward looking McCarthyism. In its place are communist plots, dirty hippies and a little cold war with a rather large USSR, a country that manages to blow up the mothership in the opening moments of the game, stranding Crypto on Earth. The title of the game is a little misleading — in his second outing Crypto isn't trying to destroy all human, just the dirty communist hippies who are threatening his source of DNA, tasty brains and meat suits.

## NASTY CASE OF GASTRO GUN

It would be easy to accuse the Australian developers Pandemic

Studios of riding on the success of the original game with the sequel, as gameplay remains by and large unchanged, but such a criticism would be unfounded; it's more of a case of "if it ain't broke, don't fix it". Although there is not much new on display in the core of the game, Destroy All Humans! 2 adds a number of little gameplay elements and mini-games that serve to extend the charm of the franchise, such as side quests in which Crypto must start up cults, and another in which the player must abduct enough of one type of citizen to harvest their DNA to upgrade abilities. Crypto also has access to more abilities in the sequel including body snatching humans and transforming targets into ammunition for his guns. Speaking of guns, along with his old arsenal Crypto has access to a few more including the amusing Disclocator which launches a gravity disc at targets, taking them for an unpredictable ride, and the Gastro Gun. The less said about the latter the better.

As with the original game, one

of the major strengths of Destroy All Humans! 2 is the funny and well written script peppered with numerous pop-culture references and jokes and the funny dialogue exchanged between characters. Once again it is Crypto who gets all of the funniest lines, whether he is opining on why he is attracted to human women or is simply trying to communicate with the most disgusting kind of human monkey of all, the unwashed hippie, but there are also a number of belly laughs to be had from reading the minds of passers by or simply by using Crypto's "Freak Out" power which causes all humans in a small area to start dancing uncontrollably.

As with most semi-open world games, how much you get out of Destroy all Humans! 2 is in direct correlation to how much you put into it. Simply follow the story missions and you won't find a great deal that is new or hugely interesting, but explore around, perform side missions and discover secrets and you should have a far more interesting time. <<

## AVAILABLE ON:

360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / Xbox / GCM

## DETAILS:

**CATEGORY:** Action

**PLAYERS:** 1-2

**DEVELOPER:** Pandemic

**PUBLISHER:** THQ

**PRICE:** \$79.95

**RATING:** M

**AVAILABLE:** Now

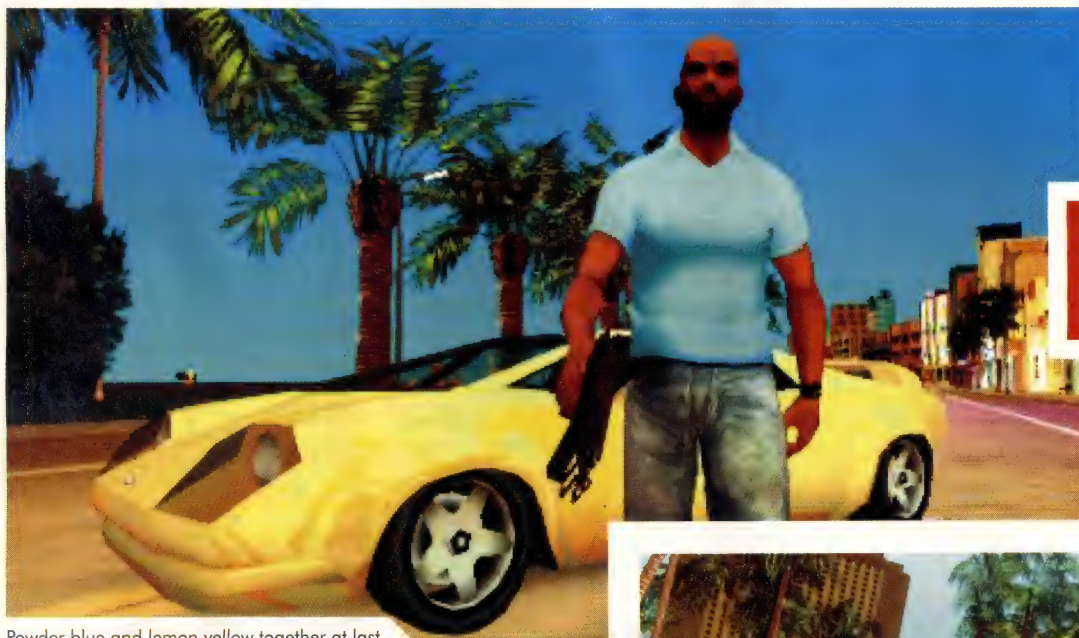
## HYPER VERDICT:

**PLUS:** Funny script, lots of side missions, well structured.

**MINUS:** More of the same.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
84	87	85
OVERALL		
85		
Destroy all hippies.		





Powder blue and lemon yellow together at last



One of the side elements to VCS is Empire Building – attacking gang territory, destroying it, buying the site, and then setting up a criminal business to earn you pocket money and new side-missions.



This image should be in slow motion



# GTA: Vice City Stories

ELIOT FISH remembers the 80s all too well...

The original Liberty City Stories was a surprising little package. Somehow, Rockstar managed to get the GTA experience onto the PSP handheld without having to make any major crippling compromises. It even had multiplayer.

Now we're back for more dirty work in the drug-riddled Vice City – or "Vic City" as we like to call it – with lead character Vic Vance, a trained soldier and brother of the goofy Lance.

## WE BUILT THIS CITY

In the time since Liberty City Stories (LCS), Rockstar has done some major technical work to the game engine and it clearly shows – Vice City Stories (VCS) looks and plays significantly better. But it's not only technical improvements to celebrate, as Rockstar has also decided to return to a more traditional story-driven GTA experience. Whilst LCS felt more like a collection of mini missions, mostly delivered to the lead character via mobile phone, Vic Vance is a character you'll really warm to over the course of a fully fleshed-out story. All those

hilarious cutscenes and characters are back, as well as those multi-staged missions that continue to escalate in outrageous style just when you think you're home and dry. This is epic handheld gameplay.

Even more important is the return of aerial vehicles, so you can look forward to admiring the entirety of Vice City – massive draw distance and all – from the comfort of a pilot's seat. In fact, in regards to draw distance, it's way better than LCS, but there's still that issue of travelling too fast in a car and having all the building textures pop into view after you've arrived at your destination.

Some missions do feel a little on the difficult side – one mission in which you must ride shotgun to prevent your car from being destroyed by pursuers, but then also survive an on-foot shootout without your brother getting killed, is verging on PSP smashing.

Another mission had us needing to collect a package, however the item in question somehow fell inside the environment, making it impossible to pick up. Another

small bug made our companions forget they needed to get into the car we were driving, making it impossible to take them to the mission marker. Obviously, Vice City has its bugs and quirks – but then, haven't the GTA games always had these small glitches? And do they really impact upon your overall experience? Well, nothing a reload can't fix.

To complete the package, there are all-new multiplayer modes – a feature that is all the more playable now that the game's engine has been buffed into glistening shape. Oh and thanks to the 80s setting, you'll be cruising the streets and gunning down gang members to the sweet sounds of Nik Kershaw and other synth pop wonders. Awesome.

Ultimately, Vice City Stories is just as compelling, exciting, hilarious and fun as the other games in the GTA series. It's a big improvement over LCS, and probably the best game you can get for the PSP this Christmas. Dig it. <<

## AVAILABLE ON:

PSP DS GBA

## DETAILS:

CATEGORY: GTA stylin'

PLAYERS: 1-Multi

DEVELOPER: Rockstar Leeds

PUBLISHER: Rockstar

PRICE: \$79.95

RATING: TBC

AVAILABLE: Nov 10

## HYPER VERDICT:

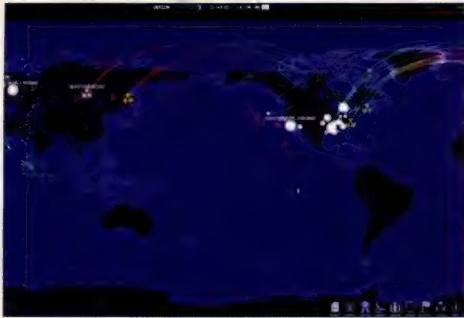
**PLUS:** The slick veneer of the 1980s, story is well integrated into missions.

**MINUS:** It won't mow your lawn for you...

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
92	94	94
OVERALL		
94		
Takes a big step forward from Liberty City Stories.		







## DEFCON: Everybody Dies

Most games are, when you come down to it, about winning. Even games without a seeming end (like MMOs) are about winning the battle, coming out on top, getting the phat lewts. DEFCON is slightly different. It's not a game about winning. It's a game about losing the least. Some people may argue semantics, saying that being the one who loses least makes you the winner but that just doesn't cut it as an explanation; DEFCON is a game about inevitable nuclear conflict and it's scored in terms of lives lost. Even if you come first you still lose.

This is the brilliance of the game; you see your numbers dropping and you're effected. You want to nuke the other guy even more and make his numbers even lower than yours. Nobody messes with your country and gets away with it — even if you were the initial aggressor.

Design wise, DEFCON is the simplest of Introversion's games (developers of Uplink and Hyper favourite Darwinia). Players take their region (it is a multiplayer only game - the only single player element being what is essentially just a trainer against some bots), place their installations, radar, missile silos and military units on the stark, ray traced map as the DEFCON counter clicks down from five, launching a full on apocalyptic war when the counter reaches one, hoping to come out at the end with the fewest casualties, a statistic counted in the millions. As with all Introversion games, DEFCON is tiny, cheap, amazingly attractive for such a simplistic style, coupled with a wonderfully sparse soundtrack and immense fun to play. We can't wait to see what they have for us next.

DANIEL WILKS

### AVAILABLE ON:

Xbox 360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / Xbox / GCN

### DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Apocalyptic Strategy / PLAYERS: 1-6

DEVELOPER: Introversion / PUBLISHER: Introversion/Steam

PRICE: Approx \$20 / RATING: N/A / AVAILABLE: Now

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
88	82	90	89



## Dirge Of Cerberus: FINAL FANTASY VII

While Dirge of Cerberus bears more than a few passing similarities to the Devil May Cry series (emo protagonist, realtime combat, devil trigger/limit break demon transformations), it has to be said upfront that at its core Dirge of Cerberus is a very different type of game. Were it to weave a few more of the DMC conventions into the proceedings, DoC might have been a much stronger game. But more on that later.

Yep, DoC is an action shooter — the series' first — but it's a Final Fantasy action shooter. It's an important distinction: what you get is a chapter of the extended FFFVII story complete with a fantastic level of presentation and heaps of story exposition. Heaps. Aside from the gorgeous, Advent Children quality movie scenes, DoC abounds with short (and not-so-short) in-game cutscenes along nearly every step of the way. Yep, DoC has Final Fantasy written all over it.

But here's the rub: the action part of this game really feels quite flat. See, Vincent can jump (and now double-jump over his Japanese incarnation), he can shoot, and he can engage in melee attacks. Combat is pretty straightforward though.

Vincent's also meant to be quite an enigmatic character prone to theatrics like swooping in and out of a scene like Batman would. Then why the hell are the levels so damn boxy and linear and closed-off? Like FFFVII, paths are pretty well-defined and the rest of the game world feels so close yet so painfully far away.

Because this a story-driven action game. If you can excuse the missed potential with the actual gameplay (ripping off DMC would have been totally acceptable here), DoC succeeds in being a solid exercise in fan service.

MARCH STEPNIK

### AVAILABLE ON:

Xbox 360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / Xbox / GCN

### DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action / PLAYERS: 1

DEVELOPER: Square Enix / PUBLISHER: Ubisoft

PRICE: \$79.95 / RATING: M / AVAILABLE: November 16

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
83	80	70	76



## Killzone: Liberation

Man, didn't Killzone on PS2 look great? Sure, not in a cheery pastel Katamari Damacy sorta way — the game had more greys and browns than a senior's cardigan catalogue — but from a purely design based viewpoint. The Helgast clearly borrowed from the Nazi book on soldier uniform and design, and for an antagonist didn't they just look terrifyingly cool? And that said — man, wasn't Killzone on PS2 disappointing. Great story, great design... crappy level design. The environments were just way too linear and tightly directed for a 3D action shooter.

The PSP version of Killzone, on the other hand, isn't a mere port of the PS2 game. It's been designed from the ground up with the handheld in mind and the result is an action shooter that is both quite different to and better than its PS2 big brother.

Rather than offering traditional first person shooting in solid 3D environments, Liberation is a third person isometric shooter with a strikingly different flavour than the mere perspective shift would imply. Instead of arcade combat (like the classic Commando) where the object is to trace your bullets into the path of enemies, gun combat is slower paced with success determined via invisible stats. Based on the gun you've got, whether you're kneeling or not (this increases accuracy) and if there's any environmental cover in between, you'll either hit or miss your mark. It may sound a little too much like you're not in the driver's seat but the system works well: you'll have to act like a soldier and think before you shoot.

Mission design is also strong once you get past the woefully average opening chapter. From there, Liberation becomes an engaging tactical shooter which is hard to put down.

MARCH STEPNIK

### AVAILABLE ON:

PSP / DS / GBA

### DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Action / PLAYERS: 1-Multi

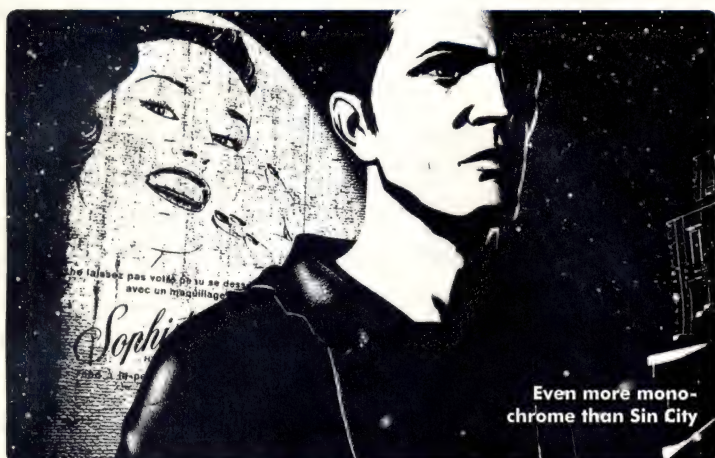
DEVELOPER: Guerilla Games / PUBLISHER: Sony

PRICE: \$79.95 / RATING: MA 15+ / AVAILABLE: Now

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
84	84	90	89







Even more monochrome than *Sin City*



## Renaissance

MAGNA PACIFIC, M 15+

After a young researcher Ilona Tasuiev is kidnapped, a hard as nails cop Barthelémy Karas is employed to track her down. When any ransom demands fail to appear, Barthelémy, with the help of the missing girl's sister discovers that all the clues seem to lead to Ilona's employers, the vast and influential multinational company Avalon and some research that could greatly effect the future of Paris, maybe even the world.

Composed entirely of light and negative space, *Renaissance* is without a doubt one of the most, if not the most striking animation to come along in the last decade. Although similar in style to the work of Frank Miller, *Renaissance* goes one step further, eschewing even that rather rough style of shading in favour of what is essentially a black and white cel-shaded approach. Much like *Sin City*, *Renaissance* uses real actors in front of digital sets but once again goes a step further and digitising many actors as well. It's an amazing effect. The Paris of the future is a beautifully evocative setting. Entirely CG, Paris contains



all of the familiar landmarks but adds holographic billboards, maglev trains, zeppelins and more science fiction accoutrements. The overall effect is a fantastically familiar, yet alien environment.

As a film, *Renaissance* wears its influences on its sleeve but does not suffer from being derivative in any way. There are great swathes of noir and elements of retro futurism a la *Gattaca* and *Blade Runner*. Director Christian Volckman has laboured for seven years to get the film made but his efforts have more than paid off. The motion captured animation is beautiful, the story is well paced and entrancing and the actors really bring their characters to life, with special mention going to Daniel Craig as the monosyllabic Barthelémy; he may not talk much but Craig makes sure you listen when he does. The main extra for the DVD release is a behind the scenes making of featurette.

**Daniel Wilks**

**FILM: 9 / FEATURES: 5**



Our hero ponders the meaning of the movie title



## The Chumscrubber

WARNER BROS, M 15+

Usually a cult film becomes a cult film despite itself, not through the intent of the director/writer. *The Chumscrubber* is the exact opposite; it wears its cult personality on its sleeve, right next to its symbolism and themes, trying hard to occupy to same space that films such as *Donnie Darko* and *Brick* currently occupy. Set in a pastel suburban wasteland that doesn't look too far from the pristine surroundings of *Edward Scissorhands*, *Chumscrubber* tells the story of disenfranchised, heavily (usually self) medicated youth, generation gaps and dysfunctional families with a dash of *Magnolia*-esque interconnectedness.

When the local drug dealer hangs himself, a young thug, his sexy, wise yet innocent girlfriend (Camilla Belle) and their high strung sidekick (a fantastic Lou Taylor Pucci) decide to kidnap the brother of the dead dealer's best friend to blackmail him into finding a hidden cache of drugs. Of course things don't go as planned and they manage to kidnap the wrong kid but hold him hostage anyway in the hopes



that the disaffected and slightly unstable hero (*Billy Elliot*'s Jamie Bell) will do the right (wrong) thing.

Although *Chumscrubber* sometimes tries a little too hard it is still an effective little black comedy with some truly great performances, special note going to Glenn Close as the mother of the dead dealer, trying desperately to remain the picture of suburban bliss while calling everyone she knows to tell them that she doesn't blame them for her son's death. The title character, the Chumscrubber is a pop-cultural icon in the world of the film starring in games, comics and cartoons; he is a teenager who literally loses his head but continues on in this mixed up crazy wasteland. How's that for subtle symbolism!

**Daniel Wilks**

**FILM: 7 / FEATURES: 6**

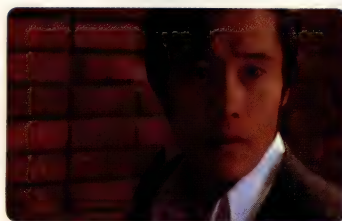


# A Bittersweet Life

EASTERN EYE, MA 15+

▶▶ Sun-woo is a quiet, taciturn perfectionist capable of incredible violence and anger if it is an expedient way to solve a problem. His nature has served him well for seven years in the employ of crime boss Boss Kang. Never having been in love and seemingly emotionless, Boss Kang sees Sun-woo as the perfect person to get to do him a little favour; watch his young girlfriend for a few days to see if she is having an affair and if the answer is yes, kill both the lovers. During the course of watching Kang's girlfriend, Sun-woo develops a fascination for her and, in an unexpected fit of morality allows the two to live, setting the scene for retribution, not only from Kang but from President Baek, a rival crime lord who has it in for Sun-woo.

*A Bittersweet Life* is yet another film that proves that South Korea is the most exciting country for film production around at the moment. Although the story is quite a straightforward revenge thriller the acting, cinematography and pacing are superb. As is the action.



Similar to the fight scenes in Park Chan-Wook's phenomenal *Oldboy*, the action in *A Bittersweet Life* is brutal and not at all elegant but amazing nonetheless. Byung-hun Lee is brilliant as Sun-woo, bringing a wonderful stillness to his character but with a bubbling rage just under the surface. You'll have a hard time tearing your eyes off him, even when you want to flinch away from the violence he perpetrates.

**Daniel Wilks**

**FILM: 9 / FEATURES: 6**

You've just killed a bunch of people - time for a light beer



## ANIME REVIEW

# Demon City Shinjuku

MADMAN, M 15

A lesser known early 90s effort by Yoshiaki Kawajiri, a man better known for the exceptional *Wicked City*, *Ninja Scroll*, *Cyber City OEDO 808* and *Vampire Hunter D* (as both director and character designer), *Demon City Shinjuku* is testament to the fact that great animation and art cannot make up for a rather dull story. Shinjuku has been taken over by demons after the evil sorcerer Levih Rah made a pact with them for phenomenal power. Enter the reluctant hero, the son of a man killed trying to bring down Levih Rah, forced into action by a beautiful girl wandering into Shinjuku to save her father and a few other plot contrivances.

As with nearly all of Yoshiaki Kawajiri anime, Kyoya, the hero has a special power that sets him aside from other people, in this case Nempo, the ability to imbue his wooden sword with his will and give it the power to cut through nearly anything. What follows are a series of fantastically animated



but only vaguely interconnected action scenes punctuated by some rather dull talkiness marred by some horrible accents (the heroine is unconvincingly British and the childish sidekick speaks with a mangled Mexican drawl). Though not nearly as good as Yoshiaki Kawajiri's other works, *Demon City Shinjuku* is still worth a watch, if only to see what one of the masters of supernatural action/horror is like on an off day.

**Daniel Wilks**

**FILM: 6 / FEATURES: N/A**





# DVD Contents

It's Madman's tenth anniversary this month so we've teamed up with them, along with Atari and JB Hi-fi, to put together a special Hyper Anime DVD. Here's what you'll find when you pop it into your DVD player...



## MADMAN PRESENTS

FULL  
EPISODE



### Naruto EPISODE 1

If you're into anime then you'd know that Naruto is so hot right now. So just who is Naruto? He's a loudmouthed young ninja with a dark secret. Twelve years before the events of episode one, the ferocious nine-tailed demon fox attacked Konoha village, and its strongest ninja sacrificed his own life to seal the demon inside a newborn child - Naruto. Twelve years later Naruto is desperate to prove himself, but due to his demonic link is something of a pariah in the village. Part drama, part action and part comedy, Naruto is an epic series.

FULL  
EPISODE



### Eureka Seven EPISODE 1

If you read our review a few issues ago you'd know that Eureka Seven is one of our favourite new series'. Taking the 'young boy and his giant mech' genre and giving it a liberal Cowboy Bebop meets extreme sports twist, Eureka Seven is packed full of interesting characters, intriguing concepts and absolutely gorgeous animation. Check out this ep and chances are, you'll be sold too.

FULL  
EPISODE



### Negima EPISODE 1

From the creator of Love Hina, Negima is a bishojo series (in other words, it has lots of pretty schoolgirls) centered around young magician Negi Springfield. After completing his magical training he's assigned a job as 'cover' in the real world, with the ulterior motive of finding his missing father, then becoming a fully fledged wizard. His job? Teaching a group of schoolgirls at Mahora Academy. It may sound like the set up for just another harem style anime, but Negima becomes more than that, mixing and matching genres well. This episode should give you a taste.



### MADMAN 10TH ANNIVERSARY TRAILERS

Madman have re-released some of the most influential, and just plain kick-ass anime around to help the birthday celebrations along. We've included trailers of some of our favourites:

- Appleseed
- Akira
- Ghost In The Shell
- Ghost In The Shell 2: Innocence
- Vampire Hunter D
- Blood: The Last Vampire
- Trigun
- Evangelion Platinum
- Hellsing



### THE RETRO COLLECTION TRAILERS

Anyone who grew up in the 80s probably has the theme song for either Battle of the Planets or Ulysses burned indelibly into their memory. And if you don't? Here's a taste of what you missed out on:

- Battle Of The Planets
- Transformers
- M.A.S.K.
- She-Ra
- Ulysses
- Beast Wars
- Voltron

### TRAILERS

- Samurai Champloo
- Dragonball Movie 13
- Gungrave
- Elemental Gelade

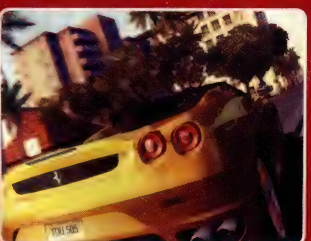
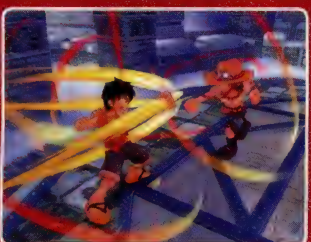
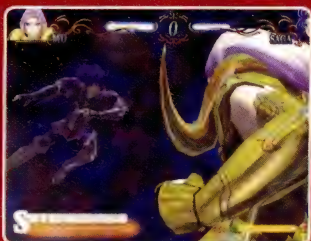
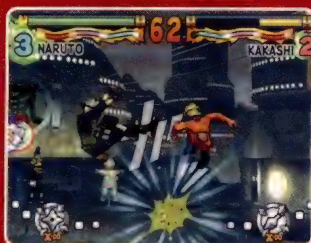


## ATARI PRESENTS

### GAME TRAILERS

Here's a taste of some of the many games based on anime that are on their way from Atari. Plus, some other big name game trailers:

- Naruto: Ultimate Ninja
- Saint Seiya: The Hades
- Dragonball Z: Tenkaichi 2
- One Piece Grand Adventure
- Test Drive Unlimited
- Pro Evolution Soccer 6
- Castlevania: Portrait Of Ruin
- Bionicle Heroes



## Madman Q&A

Over the last ten years the popularity of anime in Australia has exploded, and there's little doubt that Madman have been instrumental in this growth, pushing the medium and ensuring that we have access to a wide selection of titles. To find out a little more about Madman and the growth of anime in Australia, we had a chat with **Dean Prenc**, Madman's Anime Label Manager.

**HYPER:** Tell us a little about the background of the company.

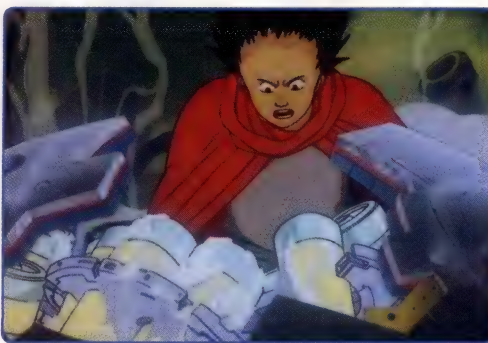
**Dean:** The company was formed 10 years ago by Tim Anderson (self-confessed pop-culture tragic!) literally out of his bedroom. The first title we released was Bubblegum Crisis 2032 on VHS. A few years later, Tim teamed up with a friend of his from university, Paul Wiegard, and formed the AV Channel (our distributor,) and Madman Films. The company has grown from there.

**How different was the anime landscape in Australia ten years ago? Obviously titles like Akira had made an impact, but how was anime perceived? How were you hoping to change that perception?**

I think these days, with conventions, anime on free-to-air TV and everything else, it's difficult to get your head around what anime was like 10 years ago. 10 years ago, it was a fringe thing, perceived largely as violent, pornographic cartoons for young men. It was all demons, androids and tentacles and there was no real acknowledgment, outside of otaku circles, of what anime was culturally speaking. We always wanted to broaden anime's appeal and grow the audience, based on our own experiences of growing up with great cartoons like STAR BLAZERS and ROBOTECH, which of course it turned out were Japanese! The main way to grow the audience was to branch out from the easy "sex and violence" sellers and try some other genres: romance, comedy, drama and so on. 10 years ago, we weren't really reaching that many girls and now, when I hit a convention, at least half the audience is female! 10 years ago, this would have boggled the mind!

**Was it hard getting retailers to stock the titles? What was the process for educating retailers (and consumers)?**

It's always been difficult convincing retailers to range anime, especially considering the bad name it wanted for itself early on. Anime is a difficult media with some wacky concepts, that simply ain't gonna sell the same way as PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN. That said, it does have an incredibly loyal fanbase and across 20 plus volumes of a series, that gets



a customer coming back to your store month-in/month-out, you could be looking at some pretty significant business.

Releases like the ANIMATRIX and KILL BILL helped us tremendously. These two mainstream properties put anime fairly and squarely in the face of Joe Blow, including a lot of our buyers. There wasn't a retailer in the land that wasn't going to range the ANIMATRIX, a key part of the MATRIX franchise. DRAGON BALL Z, probably the first major kids property to be recognised at a mass-market level as an "anime" show, and SPIRITED AWAY, with its Oscar win, also did much to gain anime shelf space where it had been previously unavailable.

In terms of the education, we just try to fly the flag as much as we can by attending conventions, running our own newsletter, through the MADBOARD discussion boards, and most recently, via our ANIME SNACKTIME podcast. We also keep

pointing out whenever we can, "You see that? That's anime! You see that over there? That's anime influenced! You see this? This is based on a manga!" and so on. These days, as a phenomenon, anime is hugely influential on Western pop-culture.

**Madman releases a huge amount of anime locally, but this must only be the tip of the iceberg in terms of releases**

**in Japan. What do you have in mind when choosing titles for release here?**

You're right, what we see is the tip of the iceberg, but we like to think it's the best part! We choose titles for Australia by considering our audience and what is likely to appeal. Some anime are simply "too Japanese" and some concepts just won't translate. I can't imagine there are too many fans familiar with the Osaka / Tokyo rivalry and all the jokes associated with it. An Osakan deriding Tokyo's sub-standard okonomiyaki won't get the same howls of laughter here that would greet it in Japan. A lot of the kawaii shows we also pass on, as Australia's "cult of cute" has got nothing on Japan! We also pass on a lot of Japanese kids properties, despite how cool they seem, because when it comes to choosing a kids property there's loads of other factors to consider beyond the story.

**What percentage of Japanese titles do you think actually wind up being officially translated for the West? Do you think the Japanese market is over saturated?**

It would be about 15%. The Japanese market doesn't seem over-saturated to me with demand as healthy as ever. Apart from having 120 million people, Japan is also a culture that has well and truly buried the perception that cartoons are for kids, so anime is hitting A LOT of people.



# WinWinWin

## Win WILD ARMS 4 and STEAMBOT CHRONICLES for PS2!

»» The latest installment in the hugely popular Wild Arms series is about to touch down here in Australia with Wild Arms 4. Formerly known for its Wild West setting, Wild Arms 4 sees the series move into more of a cyberpunk world, with a number of new gameplay elements such as 2D platforming challenges, the ability to slow down and speed up time to uncover secrets and solve puzzles, and a new battle system. Thanks to our friends at Red Ant, we have five copies of Wild Arms 4 to give away, but each winner will also receive a copy of Steambot Chronicles, the quirky and thoroughly charming new RPG for PS2 that we've reviewed this very issue. If you like customising mechs, playing in a band or dressing like a cowboy, this is the game for you. Seriously - trust us, it's a great game.

To be in the running, just answer this simple question:

»» What's the name of your character in Steambot Chronicles?

Send your answer, with your name and address to: **Everybody Do The Bumpy Trot, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW, 2016**, or email your entry to [hypercomps@next.com.au](mailto:hypercomps@next.com.au) with the comp name in the subject line. One entry per person please.

5  
PACKS  
UP FOR  
GRABS!



**RED ANT**  
[ENTERTAINMENT]

## Win KILLZONE: LIBERATION for PSP!

»» The fight against the Helghast continues in Killzone: Liberation, only this time you're going behind enemy lines to save ISA hostages and liberate Southern Vekta from the ruthless General Metrac. The new third person perspective gives you an eagle eye over the action, while heavy use of cover will help ensure you don't meet an untimely demise. Mind you, the rocket launcher probably helps too. Another big thumbs up for Killzone: Liberation is the ability to play through the entire campaign in two player co-op - very cool. Plus, there's multiplayer for up to six players as well.

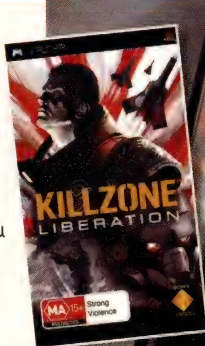
Thanks to our friends at Sony, we have six Killzone: Liberation packs up for grabs. Each pack contains a copy of the game, a bag, dog tags, hat and jacket.

To be in the running, just answer this simple question:

»» Who developed Killzone: Liberation?

Send your answer, with your name and address to: **Funny Competition Name, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW, 2016**, or email your entry to [hypercomps@next.com.au](mailto:hypercomps@next.com.au) with the comp name in the subject line. One entry per person please.

6  
PACKS  
UP FOR  
GRABS!



**SONY**

**Terms & Conditions:** 1) Entry is open to residents of Australia and New Zealand except employees and immediate families of Next Publishing Pty Ltd and its agencies associated with the promotion. 2) Only entries completed with these terms and conditions will be eligible. 3) Competition begins 9am October 31 and entries close at 6pm December 13. 4) In determining eligibility the judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. 5) The winner will be drawn at 9am December 14 at Next Publishing Pty Ltd, 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016. 6) Prizes must be taken as offered and are not redeemable for cash. 7) The promoter is not responsible for misdirected or lost mail. 8) The winners names will be published in the February issue of Hyper on sale January 3. 9) 5 winners will each receive one copy of Wild Arms 4 (RRP \$79.95) and one copy of Steambot Chronicles (RRP \$79.95). 6 winners will each receive Killzone: Liberation on PSP (RRP \$79.95), plus a Killzone: Liberation bag (RRP \$39.95), dog tags (RRP \$15.95), hat (RRP \$24.95) and jacket (RRP \$69.95). Total value of the competitions is \$2184. The promoter is Next Publishing Pty Ltd ABN 88 002 647 645 of 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016.



# KUDOS

**Tim Henderson** starts life anew in the UK

You are twenty. You are lonely. You are a miserable, anti-social twat who didn't learn a thing in high school and as a result you've become stuck in a dead-end job in a crappy café. You need to do something about it: you need to learn, you need to meet people, and you need to find a new job. You need to turn your life into something that doesn't plain suck. It's therefore quite fortunate that all the aspects of your existence are spelled out for you numerically via a series of simple menus so you can see what needs fixing. Quite handy, that.

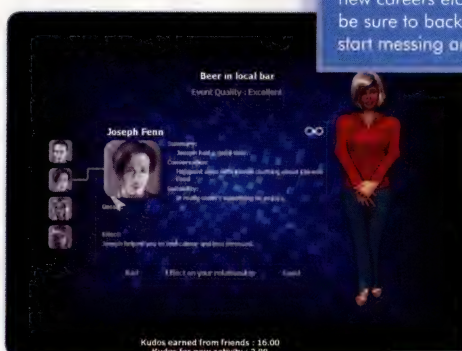
## YOU MISERABLE BUGGER!

Kudos is a life sim. It puts you in the shoes of a loser and tells you to earn a decent pair of sneakers. It's like an exuberantly intimate, menu-driven spin on the formula of The Sims.

In concept, Kudos is fantastic. However, there are some difficulty issues that since the finely balanced experience a little. To put it bluntly, the game is ludicrously hard at the start. You earn very little money, and since both your education

and social life need work there often simply isn't enough to go around. You literally have no skills of note from your schooling, so it's essential to attend night courses and buy books to advance yourself and open up your desired career opportunities, but both of these eat up time that you could spend with acquaintances. Well, it could be if they didn't want to go to a fancy restaurant that you simply don't have the cash for. The game lacks the option of being able to explain your financial situation to your virtual pals, and so they ultimately become annoyed with you and your relationship further deteriorates. It doesn't help that you're frequently mugged and that your house is just as frequently broken into, either: that alarm and those martial arts lessons don't come cheap.

Of continued annoyance are the occasional bugs that seem to leave jobs that — after vigorous night class



III If you're so inclined you can get into the game and make some tweaks to the menus to include new careers etc... This is rather neat, but be sure to backup all the files before you start messing around with them.

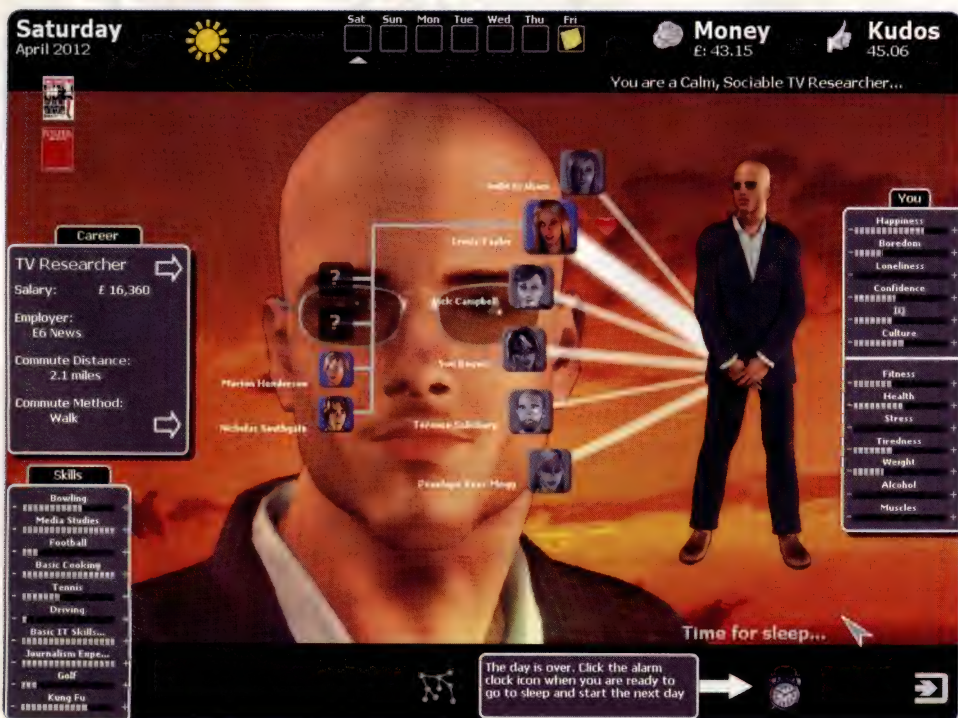
attendance or reading — you should be qualified for are impossible to apply for, shaded in a non-interactive gray in spite of your hard-earned skills. After the tedium of frequently repeating one specific activity (generally with social consequences) that assists one specific attribute, such rewards really should be available.

These gripes are unfortunate (and could well be tweaked via patch by the time you read this), as the scope of the game can be really inspiring; the various career opportunities and your ability to

fine-tune and focus on your desired line of work often being very impressive.

Certainly, if you can survive the first few years and get in a decent dose of education, things will start to look up: you will get a better job, become experienced, and get a better job yet again. Variety will open up and you will have more money to spend on greater self-improvement, social events, and trying to maintain a love interest. You will become more accomplished, and you'll be surprised by just how good simulated success can feel.

Kudos isn't a great game, but it's still worth a look. It strikes a great balance between both short bursts and extended play sessions, has almost limitless replay value, and allows you to make an ideal version of yourself without actually having to do any actual work. If only the difficulty and progression options had been more balanced. <<



## AVAILABLE ON:

360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / Xbox / GCN

## DETAILS:

CATEGORY: Life! / PLAYERS: 1

DEVELOPER & PUBLISHER: Positech Games

PRICE: GBP £12.12 (direct download)

RATING: N/A / AVAILABLE: Now

## HYPER VERDICT:

**PLUS:** Fantastic premise and scope for individual approach.

**MINUS:** Even real life isn't quite this hard, slightly buggy.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
40	60	75	75
The most ironic escape from reality that money can buy.			



# The WOW Chronicles

Paper pants and barehanded strangulation...



Interesting historical note: a mage was a Persian priest of fire, adept in magic, who had a habit of making sacrifices to the god Ohrmazd via barehanded strangulation. Interesting gaming note: WoW mages are incredibly rad.

The mage character class is a tricky one to get used to. The most important thing to remember is that you will be naked. Always. Sure, robes and hats may look mystical and spooky and, dare I say it, Gandalfian but in a combat situation, you might as well be wearing paper pants. ElBastardo the Paladin wore well in excess of three hundred pounds of solid iron and could survive direct hits by giants and demons and the Sherman Tank. Grinning the mage is routinely nut-punched by knee-high kobolds and forced to squeal girlishly. Mages die. They call them 'squishies' for a reason.

But there is a pay off. Mages are also known as 'glass cannons', and that they are. You deal out an enormous amount of damage in tiny slices of time. When you're at level one, rogues, warriors and other melee classes get lucky with smacking up a creature for maybe three points of damage per hit. Mages start out doing ten points, critting nicely, too. Someone with bigger frontal lobes than mine may wish to work out the statistical spread that only widens with levels. Mages go explodo.

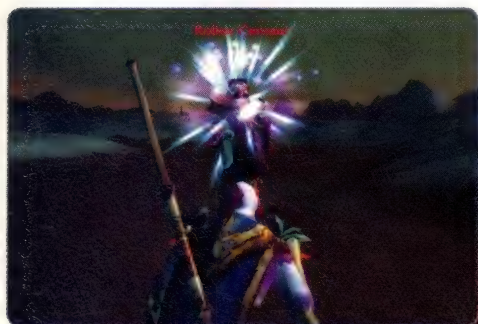
Unfortunately, in WoW, one of the major elements of combat is aggro. It is a simple system that sees bad guys - mobs, rank who they attack. They judge this on level, the amount healed and, oh yes, damage done. I don't know what comes where in the rankings but dealing out roughly four times the amount of damage as any other class sees mages generating quite a high level of aggro. That is, creatures immediately scream out at each other 'OH HOLY

JESUS THAT MAGE JUST KNOCKED OFF HALF MY HITPOINTS IN THREE POINT FIVE SECONDS GET THE BASTARD NOW NOW NOW AND BRING YOUR HARD, PIPE-HITTING MATES WHO JUST LAST NIGHT WERE TALKING ABOUT COMMITTING SINS OF THE FLESH UPON A MAGE'S SOFT ATTRACTIVE BUTTOCKS!'

That's actually in the code. I know these things. I am an expert. Trust Grinning in all things.

Casting spells takes some time. Three seconds is about average, with some killer ones taking six seconds. It helps to keep things fair, I suppose. It certainly is a problem in PVP situations, where someone like a rogue can deal out appalling damage in a limited time. Making up for this are the 'insta-cast' spells. They shoot off like you were goddamn Wild Bill himself. I have to admit, insta-cast gets my pants just a little bit unruly with fun. Judicious use of Talent Points can turn you into a walking dynamite keg in a dress.

























The Swiss army knife aspect of the mage appeals as well. Teleporting all over the world, spells to prevent you falling to your death, some useful buffs and there you go. But really, I just like being able to blast things to buggery, all the while at a long range.



Next month – Being a horde, knowing what you're doing and why PVE is for sissy-boys who love their mums.



# Retailer Listing

	STORE NAME	LOCATION
	<b>Berlin Wall Software Supermarket</b> <a href="http://www.berlinwall.com.au">www.berlinwall.com.au</a>	408 King William St, Adelaide SA. Ph: 08 8231 4799
	<b>bGamer</b> <a href="http://www.bgamer.com.au">www.bgamer.com.au</a>	Online Retailer
	<b>Burn Direct</b> <a href="http://www.burn.com.au">www.burn.com.au</a>	Online Retailer
	<b>Devoted DVD</b> <a href="http://www.devoted.com.au">www.devoted.com.au</a>	Shop 5, Rovergom Village, South Murrumbidgee VIC. Ph: 03 9436 4566
	<b>Dick Smith Electronics / Dick Smith Powerhouse</b> <a href="http://www.dse.com.au">www.dse.com.au</a>	<a href="http://dse.findnearest.com.au/">http://dse.findnearest.com.au/</a>
	<b>DVD Crave</b> <a href="http://www.dvdcrave.com.au">www.dvdcrave.com.au</a>	Shop 1/471 Payneham Road, Felixstow SA. Ph: 08 8365 5231
	<b>DVD Orchard</b> <a href="http://www.dvdorchard.com.au">www.dvdorchard.com.au</a>	Online Retailer
	<b>EB Games</b> no website	Please go to your nearest EB Games store
	<b>GameFuse</b> <a href="http://www.gamefuse.com.au">www.gamefuse.com.au</a>	Online Retailer - PH: 03 9681 8189
	<b>Game Traders</b> <a href="http://www.gametradersonline.com.au">www.gametradersonline.com.au</a>	Please go to your nearest Game Traders store
	<b>Gamehead</b> <a href="http://www.gamehead.com.au">www.gamehead.com.au</a>	Online Retailer Ph: 1800 008 525
	<b>Games Warehouse</b> <a href="http://www.gameswarehouse.com.au">www.gameswarehouse.com.au</a>	Online Retailer Ph: 02 9648 5656
	<b>Games Wizards</b> <a href="http://www.gameswizards.com">www.gameswizards.com</a>	22 Stores located in NSW, VIC & ACT. Ph 1300 131 670 for your nearest store.
	<b>Games Market</b> <a href="http://www.gamesmarket.com.au">www.gamesmarket.com.au</a>	Online Retailer
	<b>Games Connect</b> <a href="http://www.gamesconnect.com.au">www.gamesconnect.com.au</a>	Online Retailer
	<b>Gamezoo</b> <a href="http://www.gamezoo.com.au">www.gamezoo.com.au</a>	Online Retailer
	<b>Games Paradise</b> <a href="http://www.gamesparadise.com.au">www.gamesparadise.com.au</a>	Online Retailer + 2 Stores in Sydney
	<b>JB Hi-Fi</b> <a href="http://www.jbhifi.com.au">www.jbhifi.com.au</a>	Please go to your nearest JB Hi-Fi store
	<b>Quantronics</b> <a href="http://www.quantronics.com.au">www.quantronics.com.au</a>	Shop 14 / 2 O'Connell St, Parramatta NSW. Ph: (02) 9635 5554
	<b>Replay Games</b> <a href="http://www.replaygames.com.au">www.replaygames.com.au</a>	Online Retailer
	<b>Software Supermarket</b> <a href="http://www.softwaresu.com.au">www.softwaresu.com.au</a>	248 Franklin Street Adelaide SA. Ph: 08 8410 3111
	<b>TechBuy</b> <a href="http://www.techbuy.com.au">www.techbuy.com.au</a>	Online Retailer Ph: 029-648-1818
	<b>The Gamesmen</b> <a href="http://www.gamesmen.com.au">www.gamesmen.com.au</a>	Penshurst 02 9580 9888; Penrith 02 4721 7411; Wollongong 02 4225 2424
	<b>Toys 'R' Us</b> <a href="http://www.toysrus.com.au">www.toysrus.com.au</a>	Stores all across Australia
	<b>True Gamer</b> <a href="http://www.truegamer.com.au">www.truegamer.com.au</a>	Online Retailer



**Where:**  
City Hunter Bondi Junction  
Level 1, 197-199 Oxford St,  
Bondi Junction (at the  
beginning of pedestrian  
precinct)

**When:**  
2nd Dec (12.00-20.00)  
9th Dec (12.00-20.00)  
16th Dec (12.00-20.00)

**Game:**  
CS: Source

**Registration:**  
City Hunter Chinatown:  
level 1, 374 Sussex st  
Sydney Ph: 9261 0768

**City Hunter Burwood:**  
level 1, 154-156 Burwood rd,  
Burwood. Ph: 9745 0768

**Fee:**  
\$7 In advance  
\$10 at Door

City Hunter Bondi Junction's  
PC components are  
supplied by







# MAIL HYPER!

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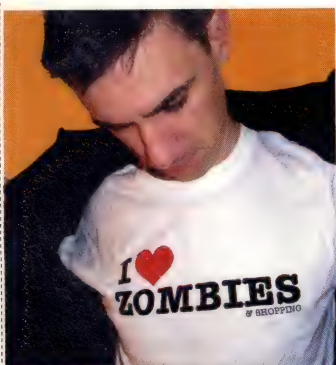
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NSW 2016 Australia

## EMAIL:

freakscene@next.com.au

## LETTERS OF THE MONTH!

Thanks to THQ, our two favourite letter writers each month will receive an awesome "Random Gaming Shirt" for their efforts. First up, it's a Dead Rising "I Love Zombies & Shopping" t-shirt. Sweet!



## ★★Letter of the Month!★★ SHAMBLING WITH THE TIMES

So there I am, sitting on my couch in my darkened lounge room on the night of my birthday. Even though my girlfriend had presented me with Dead Rising for my 360 that morning, I deliberately held on from playing it. I wanted it to be dark, nominally to heighten the mood, but really because the daytime glare made it impossible to see the screen. I fire up the system and soon I'm mowing down zombies with gleeful abandon. Practice for Wilks' Inevitable Zombie Apocalypse®. After a whole day of denied pleasure, I was finally going to the mall.

A few minutes into the mayhem I trigger my first conversation with the local Willamettions. Hmm, no actual, audible speech. No problem, I'll just read the sub-title of the conversation. I shift forward in my chair. My eyes instinctively narrow. At the bottom of the screen, a blurred line of strange, arcane characters appears. I furiously strain to decode the fuzzy language but, even as I think I make out the first word (Brains?) it's gone. Oh, I think to myself, that was a shame. Oh well, mustn't be too disappointed. There's always the missions.

But no, there are no missions. Or, to put it more properly, there are missions, but I have no idea what they are. Apparently the designers have a thing for that strange and incomprehensible language in which every conversation and mission briefing is constructed.

Hours later, as night gives way to dawn, a shambling realisation hits me. The TV! Instantly I imagine the Dead Rising producer sitting



[up] I'M ON FIRE! HELP ME OPRAH! HELP ME TOM CRUISE!

at their desk in front of their 26" LCD monitor. My vision shuffles and lurches to the Dead Rising play-tester sitting before a 32" LCD television. How could I have been so naïve? No longer are games designed for lurching, rotting CRT sets. The long-feared day had come around at last. Because of the inferior resolution of my archaic display, I could no longer even play my games. When there are no more lines of vertical resolution, the words shall be blurred and unreadable.

Then, for a while, I was angry. How hard would it have been to lay a speech track over the sub-titles? Or include an option to enlarge the sub-title font size? I picked up September's Hyper from its pride of place on the carpet next to my side of the bed, to reread Wilks' review. Maybe he encountered this problem also? Maybe I'm not alone. Maybe; what's this? An article on LCD TVs? Interesting.

This was going to be a rant. I had planned to rage against the arrogance and lack of forethought of game developers and the refusal of the new technologies to compromise with the old. But I haven't got time.

Because after endless months of scrimping and saving, my new 40" LCD TV has arrived. And it is beautiful. Like a liquid crystal Rosetta Stone, it decodes the blurred language of the game into clear, crisp, readable English words. I wonder how I ever managed to kill zombies without the aid of 1080i processing in the past. No longer naïve, I pick up my soccer ball and don my Megaman costume, secure in the knowledge that when the IZA comes, I'll be ready.

**Jeremiah25**

*Rest assured that if Wilks had a beer right now he would be weeping silent tears of joy into it. You understand the joy of the high def TV. You also understand the Inevitable Zombie Apocalypse. We shall fight side by side against the legions of the undead!*

## ★★Letter of the Month!★★ ARITHMETIC IS FUN!

Dearest Hyper,

While perusing your "Xbox 360 Peripheral Roundup" in November's issue, I noticed something. While realistically speaking many of these items are no more than a couple of bits of fabric, or some \$1.49 copper wiring, their price tags often soar into the realms of make believe. As a 15 year old sans a job, in a quite middle class, average family, I get given \$30 a month for my personal expenses. If I were to save for a whole year, I would have (rather ironically) \$360 for my own purposes. However, in seeing the prices for just the peripherals needed to have a "complete gaming experience", I can see rather quickly that my meagre pittance is far from sufficient to have one.

So I went on my merry way and did some arithmetic. For all the Xbox peripherals listed in your roundup (without doubling up) it would cost me \$1621.85. For an Xbox Premium Package, it's another \$649.95. For the other peripherals mentioned, it is \$748.85. For the hardware needed to run the peripherals, including iPod, DS, PSP, and a midrange computer it would cost me \$3526. And thus my predicament becomes apparent.

But who could forget games, the gems of interactive entertainment that grace our homes with screamed curses and we get shot, screamed victory statements as we shoot and screaming as we are chased by zombies. For the top rated game (in Hyper November) for each system mentioned, I am looking at a grand total of \$349.80. Goodness gracious, it seems I have found something I can afford. Of course, what good is a game system without a kickass HDTV to go with it? So I threw in the top pick from your HDTV Roundup (the Samsung LA32R7) which comes for a measly \$2999.

So all in all, for a complete gaming experience, I can make a

# CAPTION THIS!

**Shane Crosling** had some stiff competition in a sea of random Michael Jackson entries, but the simplicity of his submission won the day.



"Hi Kids... I'm Mr Urinal Cake"



conservative estimate of needing \$9895.45. That's right, I can have a complete gaming experience, if I save up my \$360 for just 27 years. I can enjoy what everyone who is rich enjoyed in 2006/07 in 2033. Hoorah for me. Unfortunately the laws of technology state that "What's new is old already" so in 2033, me and my complete gaming experience will be dusty and obsolete.

"But what if you got a job?" I head the university-educated 20-somethings yell. Well, if I were to get a part-time minimum wage job, I would then make \$12,000 a year. It seems a lot, but in the 10 or so months it would take to reach my goal the infallible laws would apply again, and me and my Xbox 360 will be alone in the empty channels of Xbox Live as everyone else rushes off to buy the PS(6x10), and my problem begins all over again. Except for with the new generation, there will be a newer, completer gaming experience that will undoubtedly cost twice as much.

So what is to be done? Given the amount of PS2 and Xbox crap currently on the shelves of my local blockbuster (my only source of games), and the frustrating absence of the kookier games you have recommended (while 50 Cent and America's 10 Most Wanted stand four copies deep), I applaud Nintendo's attempt at innovation. The decision to focus on a truly revolutionary system that improves gameplay (an interactive, enjoyable, fundamental part of games), rather than on the shinier things in life (graphics, a passive, secondary feature) means that the price tag is significantly slashed due to the lack of money guzzling superprocessors. The new grass-roots ideology of Nintendo and the Indie gaming scene means that we now have an alternative to the sales-driven world of big gaming, a place where games are made for fun, rather than for numbers. Xbox and Sony need to take a lesson from Nintendo and focus on fun, or they will turn gaming into an elitist club, only for those who can afford it.

Sincerely,

**Will McRostie**

Hey Will,

The Hyper mail bag is often a bit like an endless, sweeping desert plain, where all that can be seen for miles around is incomprehensible grammar and convoluted thought. But every now and then an interesting, well-researched and well-written letter arrives to form an oasis, at which we can sooth our parched minds. In other words, nice one.

*Our advice? (and this is pretty much our number one life tip so everyone pay attention) Marry into wealth. You're obviously a pretty cluey guy. Find a rich broad and marry her! Just learn the words to every Boys II Men song from their landmark album Cooliehighharmony and fling some woo! Sure, true love is an interesting concept for hippies but this is the real world we're talking about here. Besides, you'll be so hopped up on Next-Gen Juice it won't even matter. Problem solved.*

## HEXBOX

I'm a Nintendo fan. I'm not obsessed, but I seem to get more enjoyment out of Nintendo's gaming systems.

But with the Wii still a little down the track and me with \$800 I decided to try the X-Box 360. After all, before the Wii came out I'd have the money saved to buy it too.

So I got home, gloating about the fact that I now had the most powerful gaming system in the world (and my family; even cooler) and I rushed to open it. Set up my account and started playing Perfect Dark Zero. Then the tale takes a twist.

One day more than a week after I'd bought the console the system froze. I reset the console and it wasn't working!! Three red lights flashing around that ring thingo. So I read the troubleshooting info of the manual which said to check online. I checked the site, followed the instructions and machine's still flashes red. Methinks red with anger, which was starting to fit with how I felt.

So I called customer service, talked to a rep, went through the troubleshooting (again!!), getting redder and in the face, and suddenly the worst - I suddenly have to swallow the news that my serial number isn't even registered on their database!!! What the doose???

They told me to phone back in a few days, which I did - still nothing. They said they'd put it down as a top priority and that I should be receiving a call within the next 24-48 hours with what to do next.

Two weeks later they still hadn't called, so I decided to call them myself.

I got through; apparently my serial number was now on their systems and they could give me the info I needed to get the thing repaired (by this stage I would have settled for a refund if they gave them, but no). I got an email from them a few minutes after I ended the call - suddenly I see

that I have to send the bloody thing to NZ!!! Things like that take weeks to fix within Oz, but I had to send it overseas!

I was reaching the end of my rope, and coz Microsoft weren't open to my complaints I called the store where I bought it to bitch. ONLY THEN (I should have been informed by Microsoft, surely) I found out that coz I was still within my 30 day period by 2 days I could get the system replaced new for old. So I went back to the store to get it replaced, taking the email with me.

But turns out the info that X-Box supplies in their emails was insufficient to deal with such things (once again I felt a little cheated coz their database should have shown I was still within my 30 day period and as such should have been sent the RA number in the first place) and I had to wait about 25 minutes on hold in the store for the number. Finally I got a new console for my trouble.

But I was shocked to hear from

- 3) I heard that Metroid Prime 3 was to be a launch title for the Wii. Is this true or has it been temporarily shelved?
  - 4) What difference (if any) does Twilight Princess on the Wii have to the GCN version?
  - 5) Any release date for Pokemon Diamond/Pearl? (I'm a Pokefan too).
  - 6) Is there any offline mode for FFXI?
  - 7) Any Zelda in the works for DS? Please say yes!
- Regards,  
**Daniel**

*Sorry to hear you got such a run around Daniel but in answer to your question, the reason Microsoft does well compared to Nintendo (at least in our region) is due to marketing (Nintendo does next to none), some great games and the fact that the Xbox 360 is a good product. That 20% figure that some dude in a shop gave you would be hideously inflated. Flaws with all consoles are the exception, not the*

## "I can have a complete gaming experience if I save for 27 years"

one of the sales reps that about 20 PER CENT of X-Box's have faults!! Might be fitting (I mean it's Microsoft after all) but in a world built around competition, particularly from Sony, it's pathetic.

Which brings me to the point I want to draw. My story is not an anomaly.

It happens a fair bit of the time. And not only do people like me get run around when we try to fix the problem, we get no form of compensation. Most would want to give up and get refunded, but that's not an option.

So, my question is, if this is what X-Box customers experience how does it follow that the X-Box does so well against it's Nintendo counterpart? Especially considering Nintendo has been around a lot longer and proved to be trustworthy!

I'll still use my 360 (if it works) and continue to buy games for it, but that's it. I'll stick with the dog I know.

Now for some [other] questions.

- 1) Read the X-Box peripherals section in issue #157 and noticed you didn't include the fighting arcade stick (which is available packaged with Dead Or Alive 4 at JB-HI FI at least). Thoughts on it?
- 2) Ever think of doing reviews on X-Box Live Arcade downloadable games?

*rule. Wilks managed to blue screen not one but two of our GCNs at work but our personal consoles have been going strong for years. Now on to your other questions:*

- 1) *It's not a bad stick for the money.*
- 2) *We were thinking of doing it quite a while ago but when we started downloading the available games we discovered that the vast majority were absolute rubbish. We will probably revisit the idea again in the future though.*
- 3) *It's no longer a launch title, but is still well on the way and should be out early next year.*
- 4) *Just the control scheme (and the Wii version may be slightly higher resolution).*
- 5) *They're out in Japan now, but no sign of a release date yet for Australia...*
- 6) *Nope, it's an MMO.*
- 7) *You need to be buying Hyper more often my friend! We mentioned it (Phantom Hourglass) in our October issue and did a preview on it in our August issue. It's going to be BRILLIANT.*

## DEAD D

I was just playing my Xbox the other day when the d-pad on one of my controllers stopped working. It became jammed and almost impossible to move.



So I decided to change controllers only to realise the cord was ripping and most of the wires inside the cord have been splitting.

Yep you guessed right, these are the original controllers that were released with the Xbox. You thought they were bad when you first got them but they really do just get worst.

Anyway, in Tony Hawks Pro Skater 3 I only need to get 1 more stat point to fully complete the game but I find it impossible to do it without the d-pad.

If only someone could provide me with a new controller....

**Dillon Sayasane**

*There are these places in most metropolitan centres called shops that should be able to supply you with a new controller for suitable remuneration.*

## RPG LOVIN'

First of all I would like to say congrats on making the best damn game mag that money can buy. I totally agree with Cam when he said that the mag is the best its been in a long time. Which leads me to the point of my letter.

Over the last 12 months or so of Hyper, I have noticed an increase in the amount of RPG reviews. This is great news for all those RPG fans out there who are really serious about their gaming. Its no secret that we here in Oz get screwed when it comes to getting a local release of RPG's that get released in the U.S, so when we do actually get them (and the number is growing thankfully) its nice to know that Wilks will give the RPG the review it deserves. We may only be a small group of gamers, but we're dedicated and

im glad Hyper is there for us with the latest reviews so we can make an informed purchase. It was also great to see the odd import review (even though Tales of Legendia was rather average game at best) because alot of us do import the games that dont get released here. So in closing let me say thanks guys for giving us the best game mag month in month out. Keep up the good work!

**Concrete Donkey**

*You'll love next issue then Donkey - we'll have reviews of Neverwinter Nights 2, Gothic 3 and Dark Messiah of Might and Magic.*

## ¡MÁS LUCHA POR FAVOR!

Quick question, and forgive me if you've discussed this in the mag at some point in the past, but why is it that more game companies don't sponsor Mexican wrestlers? I remember back in the day when Acclaim were trying to get publicity for their new game 'Suck It Down: Xtreme Man On Man Wrestling' and they had a competition where winners would pit themselves against 'Lil' Public Acclaim', the company's sponsored Mexican wrestler, and if they won they'd be showered in gold and be a part of the 'thumbs up who likes blow jobs' ad campaign for the game. The sponsored wrestler thing seemed to peter out a bit after one of the contestants was killed, but personally I think the spirit should live on. Imagine the titanic showdowns between combatants and fanboys alike, when Sony's Ken Mutant-agi (float like an insane CEO's head, stings like a bitch when we delay the PS3) goes up against Nintendo's Rockin' Gaming Granny

# Yahtzee Croshaw's the unappreciated

An ongoing celebration of videogame characters for whom no fan fiction will ever be written...

## Kurtis Stryker (Mortal Kombat series)

In a world where the ability to perform triple backward somersault flying kicks is on a par with being able to walk, it's refreshing to see a character who has a normal job; an upstanding officer of the law. He certainly seems easier to identify with than all those weirdos with four arms and no pupils in their eyes he hangs out with.

It's just that I don't think anyone explained to Stryker that he was entering a martial arts competition. I don't know if he found some loophole in the big book of fighting or if the referee just wasn't paying attention but somehow Stryker was admitted into the ring of kombat armed with nightstick, grenades, electric tazer, explosives, and lest we forget, a gun. People kicked up enough of a stink when Kabal showed up with hookswords and here's this guy with half a SWAT team inventory in his pants.



I have to admit, though, it's ballsy to use special equipment in your finishing move. Compared to some fighters that's almost like being wheelchair-bound, but damn that dynamite makes for a crowdpleaser; few fatal punches can claim to also incorporate a free fireworks display. God bless you, Kurtis.



with her deadly Wii incontinence attack! Why wait to see the outcome of the next console war when it could be decided in the ring?

There's just so much potential! In fact, to drum up support for the idea, I'm going to get sponsors and take a ride-on lawnmower around Australia. I'll be back in Sydney in time for a tickertape parade on the day of the PS3 launch. See ya there!

**Screw Flanders**

*Hey SE,*

*Why, just last month we did a massive roundup of the game industry's leading professional wrestler mascots. We even had frame by frame shots of Namco's Katamari Insanity as he wandered into the crowd to roll up piles of fanboys into a clinging blob of joygasm, before steamrolling his opponent into the mat with them. The scene hasn't died, man.*

## THE HONGSTER

Dear Hyper

Since resigning his position as Hyper mascot, Amos has really let himself slide. I bumped into him the other day in Miami, and he was a mess. He was staggering down the street, bottle of liquor in hand, and when I asked him what had happened, all he could say in his slurred, alcohol induced diction was "szh' buy me a dsh-rink?"

I decided, on behalf of Hyper readers everywhere, to put the poor fellow out of his misery. Pushing him over, I locked on and started to wail on him. Obviously, some part of the old spy Amos still lurked in that drug ravaged body, as he managed to pick himself up and make a run for it. He was fast! I chased after him, unsuccessfully trying to punch him in the back of the head a couple of times. There was only one thing for it - I jacked the nearest van and drove after him. After a parallel approach I accelerated and veered in, slamming him against a wall with bone shattering force. Again, he just picked himself up and kept running. And that was when I noticed ANOTHER Amos walking down the street... what the hell is going on? Did you guys clone him or something? So you could have an Amos for every day, and dare I say it, every whim?

That's just sick.

**Pseudonymph**

*We're sick? Did you ever stop to think about the poor bedraggled digital Amos' family? Just because he lives in a videogame and just because there are hundreds of Amos clones walking around Miami perpetually drunk doesn't mean he hasn't got feelings, or a family to go home to after you turn the game off. Oh wait, yes it does.*



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# GENCON 2006 PART 2: OH THE HUMANITY

» Christian Read



A wizard's staff has a knob on the end



GenCon ended well for me as my eyes beheld a perfect vision of holiness, the costume parade, where everyone brings out their secret fantasies and sews themselves into them, sometimes poorly. Thanks to some efforts on the behalf of the con organisers, and just as importantly, a lot of wheedling and self-important begging from me, I got the coveted backstage pass into the changing rooms. Sadly, this didn't involve a lot of glamorous shooting of binge-and-purge models doing drugs and drinking champagne in sexy underwear and Spock ears, as my sleep deprived mind had promised me. It meant watching a lot of, err, hefty chaps squeeze into some terrifying outfits. And Jedi. Many, many frigging Jedi. Apparently, all it takes is a bathrobe, some Wellington boots, a ten second choreographed kata that serves only to remind people of how stupid you look doing sword moves without intense training, and an expensive toy lightsaber to become a Force master. Then Bob's your uncle, you're ready to fight evil and whatnot.

I have to admit though, hosted by a lovely Jadis look-alike from Narnia, the costume parade/geek fashion show had its moments. Oh there was the embarrassingly sincere monologue from someone dressed as the vampire Sheila from Underworld. There was the three superhot belly dancers

and one guy belly dancer, doing their thing to the theme song from Buffy, and even a Benny Hill routine. Still, despite being basically appalled at all the people having their own brand of wrong fun, I was, however, charmed by the young woman dressed as the iconic halfling thief from D&D. Her pickpocketing routine was delightful. The evil magician and good priestess who sang 'the Phantom of the Opera' to each other, sans irony, on the other hand, were too embarrassing to cope with.

But without a doubt the best laugh was the chap with the blue elf thingo girlfriend. Her boobs were wrangled into a pushup bra so severe as to make me feel sorry for the pain she must have been going through rather than want to check her out. I don't know about you, but if my girl was wearing her undies in public, looking kind of good and I decided to wear chainmail, in forty degree heat, I'd leave a few donuts on the table, you know what I'm saying?

Finally, what's a con without making a knob of yourself? Meeting Monte Cook, D&D creator and the finest RPG designer alive, a bit of a hero to me, had me jabbering at the poor bastard. "Oh, I love you so much Monte!" Thankfully, the chap dealt with that kind of stuff all the time and so seemed unphased by my sudden delve into spasticity.

That's GenCon for you. The Geek Formal. It'll do your head in. <<



OK, jokes aside these two actually look pretty good



[below] Somehow Courtney Love has become a Japanese hippie



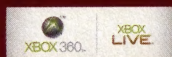


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November 2006



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## Next Issue:

Another massive review issue awaits with full reviews of **Medieval II: Total War**, Gears of War, Call of Duty 3, Rainbow Six: Vegas, Tony Hawk's Project 8, Dark Messiah of Might & Magic, NeverWinter Nights 2, Gothic 3, Rayman Raving Rabbids, Viva Piñata, DOAX2, Mario Hoops 3-on-3, and hopefully The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess and Red Steel.



**Plus:** Exclusive interviews! DICE on Bad Company, EA Black Box tell us about SKATE and Quantic Dream school us in Heavy Rain. We'll also be looking at Blu-Ray and HD-DVD to find out a little more about what each of the next generation DVD formats have to offer, as well as getting our mitts on some of the must-have gadgets and gear that will be available this Christmas.

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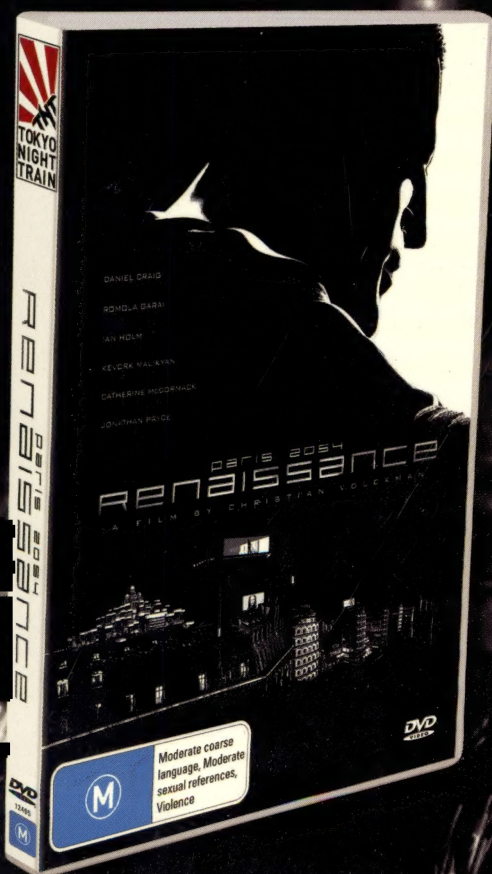
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